The New REPUBLIC

APRIL 9, 2008 • $4.95

WE HAVE TO CHOOSE ONE

HOW OBAMA vs. CLINTON IS KILLING THE DEMOCRATS

NOAM SCHEIBER / THE EDITORS

AFTER JEREMIAH WRIGHT…
E.J. DIONNE JR.

THE TRUTH ABOUT NAFTA
JOHN B. JUDIS

DO CELL PHONES CAUSE CANCER?
EZEKIEL J. EMANUEL

HISTORY IN THE SHADOW OF DEATH
PETER N. MILLER

Plus
The *Times'* Sharia Obsession
LEON WIESELTIER

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If hard drugs such as heroin or cocaine were legalized would you be likely to use them?

99% SAY "NO."

Zogby International asked that question of 1,028 likely voters. Ninety-nine out of 100 said "No." Only 0.6 percent said "Yes."[1]

Drug War advocates have always insisted that addiction would explode if drugs were legalized. But that argument comes apart under the weight of the evidence. While a poll can't predict actual drug use, it clearly shows that most of us avoid hard drugs because of common sense – not fear of arrest.

And that's always been the case. At the beginning of the last century when a virtual free market for drugs existed, use rates were lower than they are today.[2] Drug use and addiction – along with crime, violence and corruption – only began to climb after the advent of drug prohibition in 1914.[3]

Isn't it time to end the War on Drugs? Let's turn addiction problems over to the people who dealt with them effectively before 1914 – doctors, nurses and health care professionals.

Common Sense for Drug Policy
www.CommonSenseDrugPolicy.org www.DrugWarFacts.org
www.ManagingChronicPain.org www.MedicalMJ.org
www.TreatingDrugAddiction.org
www.info@csdp.org

1. Zogby America Poll of Likely Voters 10/24/07 thru 10/27/07, "If hard drugs such as heroin or cocaine were legalized, would you be likely to use them?" sponsored by StoptheDrugWar.org, full results and other info online at http://stopthedrugwar.org/legalization. 2. Speaking out against drug legalization, US Drug Enforcement Administration, from the web at http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/demand/speakout/06so.htm and Courtwright, David T., "Dark Paradise: A History of Opiate Addiction in America" (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 9; 3. Courtwright, "Dark Paradise," 2001.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

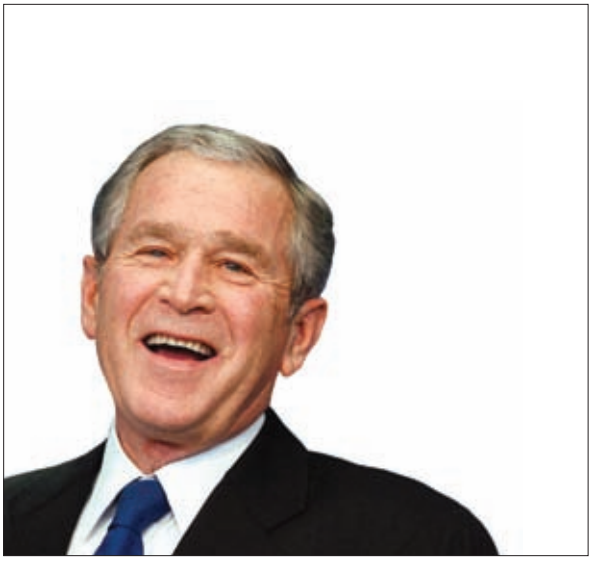
A Journal of Politics and the Arts

VOLUME 238 WASHINGTON, APRIL 9, 2008 NUMBER 4,833

Bush's Last Laugh

In the recent history of presidential campaigning, April is the time when hope springs eternal. When every Democratic general election candidate—Michael Dukakis! John Kerry!—looks like he might have the stuff to pull off a landslide. It is the time to heal from the knocks and bruises suffered during the primary season. You raise money, you begin building a case for the fall, you vet vice presidential candidates, you start to knock around your opponent, and you still have time to head to Florida to work on your tan.

That's what makes the road to the Denver convention so damn frustrating. John McCain is heir to a presidency whose accomplishments now include an economy careening toward a deep recession; on issue after issue, public opinion mirrors the Democrats' policies. This should be the one election that even the party of Dukakis couldn't screw up.



JIM YOUNG/REUTERS/LANDOV

Yet here we are in April, and the situation for Democrats verges on the apocalyptic. Where it once looked like Bill Clinton and Al Gore had helped purge the party of the lame identity politics that had ruined Democratic candidates for a generation, discussions of race and gender have returned with a vengeance. Supporters of Clinton and Obama compete to prove who is the bigger victim—opponents are casually tarred as sexist or racist. And, as soon as the Democrats began acting like it was 1984, that bad omen, Geraldine Ferraro, returned, as if on cue.

There are many reasons to believe that this primary season will end in tears for Democrats. On page 17, Noam Scheiber catalogues several grim scenarios. Democrats are spending millions of dollars bludgeoning one another in ways that can't help but abet McCain—while McCain does a neat job of consolidating his base and building goodwill with the rest of the electorate.

But the biggest problem isn't what's being said by the candidates; it's what's not being said. Heading into a general election, candidates need narratives that justify their claim on the White House. Bill Clinton understood this in 1992. By the time he strode to the dais at the convention in Madison Square Garden, he had spent months fine-tuning his rationale for running and, importantly, formulating compelling language about the economic plight of the country and his broad approach for reversing it.

In the current campaign, neither candidate has come close to approaching his level of clarity, especially when it comes to the issue that offers Democrats the simplest path to the presidency: the economy. They have failed to articulate a critique of the wild Bush-era deregulation that has allowed the greed of banks to run amok. When it comes to globalization, they are at such a loss to describe (let alone combat) the fallout from systemic changes that they resort to tired, dishonest trashing of NAFTA (see "Trade Secrets," page 10).

In part, this is a product of the campaign and the particular candidates. They basically agree about the state of the world, so when they disagree, even over relatively picayune matters, they do so loudly and angrily. They fall prey to the narcissism of small differences. And, in the course of their squabbling, they fail to make the case for good policies.

Take the debate over health care. Both candidates believe in universal health care, yet they are beating the hell out of each other over relatively minor differences. The conversation is a visceral wonkfest. But what gets lost in this storm of details is the broader case for reform. There is, of course, a time for this kind of debate, but that time was much earlier in the season.

When Obama or Clinton eventually claims this nomination—and it increasingly looks like that won't happen until June—he or she will have only a short time to formulate general-election narratives; the period for testing arguments and laying groundwork will be impossibly compressed. And that compression will prove especially problematic on issues, such as national security, on which Democrats must tack back to the center. When a candidate prepares policies and rhetoric for the fall, it's clearly better to do it in subtle, little nibbles rather than grotesquely large bites. But, with Clinton and Obama fighting for the allegiance of liberal-minded primary voters, they won't make these important adjustments for months.

All of which is to say that it's about time for the Democratic Party to panic. If it wants to win this election, it needs this race to end as soon as possible. Every day spent on the primaries represents an opportunity cost and diminishes the chances for ultimate victory.

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Moral-Hazard Relativism

When Congress was constructing its economic stimulus bill in February, Democrats attempted to insert a provision that would have extended unemployment benefits by 13 weeks. Republicans would have none of it: Doing so would create an "incentive for people who could otherwise be employed not to be employed," sniffed South Dakota Senator John Thune. That's the way moral hazard works: If government helps those in need, it just creates an incentive to act irresponsibly.

If Republicans had followed this line of logic when investment bank Bear Stearns threatened to collapse last week, they should have quickly rejected the idea of a federal bailout. After all, Bear had acted irresponsibly, aggressively embracing the preposterous notion underlying the current financial crisis: that real estate prices would keep going up, making otherwise indefensible subprime mortgages a good investment. Surely it would be a mistake for the feds to sweep to the rescue and thereby encourage such recklessness.

Well, maybe not. The Bush administration agreed to step in, and Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson brushed off the moral-hazard argument; the firm had already suffered enough. "If you would ask Bear Stearns shareholders in terms of what had happened to their value, I don't think any of them would think this was good for them."

He has a point. But the episode serves to illustrate the fallacy of Thune's argument. No one who loses his or her job is very happy about it, either, even if unemployment benefits are available—so, during a recession, such benefits have a minimal adverse impact on employment levels. It's more than a little troubling that the Bush administration finds it so much easier to sympathize with the plight of Wall Street titans than with that of ordinary Americans.

CORRESPONDENCE

Josh Patashnik's recent article, "Reform School" (March 26), is disappointingly inaccurate. He misquotes my interview in the *Concord Monitor*, in which I distinguished Obama's innovative teacher compensation proposal from the kind of old-style merit-pay plans that have failed in the past. Also, Patashnik worries that Obama is insufficiently bold on education reform without, apparently, having read Obama's education plan. Patashnik cites favorably the kind of teacher-led compensation reform developed in Denver but seems to be unaware that this plan is one of several cited in Obama's platform as an example of the kind of innovative approach his career ladder plan would seek to support. The plan also promotes a range of incentives to teach in high-need schools, including high-quality alternative approaches to teacher recruitment and preparation and extended time for student learning—all things that Patashnik paints as absent from the debate. Obama's advisers, who hold a wide range of views, agree that new approaches to education reform are essential to create both the incentives and supports for the serious changes needed to upgrade urban schools, transform the teaching profession, and dramatically improve educational achievement. Next time Patashnik wants to characterize the candidates' views, he might want to start by finding out what they are first.

Linda Darling-Hammond
Charles E. Ducommun
Professor of Education
Stanford University

Josh Patashnik responds:

In my article, I wrote that Professor Darling-Hammond had "emphasized to the *Concord Monitor* that [Senator Obama's] teacher-compensation plan … wasn't *really* a performance-pay scheme." The *Concord Monitor* article shows that she was explicitly contrasting a performance-pay approach with Obama's: "Usually, merit pay meant some kind of bonuses for teachers at the end of the school year," she told the *Monitor*. "[Obama's plan] is more like what you would see with lawyers who move from associate to partner at a law firm." I am puzzled by her charge that I seem unaware that Obama cites the Denver teacher-compensation scheme as a model for national reform. My article noted his frequent references to Denver and explained that they are part of the reason education-reform advocates are warm to his candidacy. Finally, my article did not "[paint] as absent from the debate" the other aspects of Obama's education platform Darling-Hammond mentions. I acknowledged that the platform contains a number of innovative ideas. The reformers I interviewed for the article, though, were unanimous in their sentiment that Obama's education plan, while encouraging in places, does not go as far as they would like. ◆

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A Canwest Publication

THE NEW REPUBLIC (ISSN 0028-6583), Vol. 238, Number 6, Issue 4,833, April 9, 2008. (Printed in the United States on March 21, 2008.) Published bi-weekly (except for skipped publication dates of May 21, July 23, and December 17, 2008) at 1331 H Street, NW, Suite 700, Washington, D.C. 20005. Telephone (202) 508-4444. For advertising inquiries, please contact Lauren Sims at (202) 508-4444. Yearly subscriptions, $79.97; foreign, $119.97 (U.S. funds); Canada, $99.97 (U.S. funds). Back issues, $8.00 domestic and $10.00 foreign/Canada (includes postage & handling).

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Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Rights and permissions: fax (202) 628-9383. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. For hard copy reprints, call (202) 508-4444. Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, and CD-ROM are available through ProQuest, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone (800) 521-0600. Postmaster: Send changes of address to The New Republic, P.O. Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Send letters and unsolicited manuscripts to letters@tnr.com. **For subscription inquiries or problems call (800) 827-1289 or visit our website at www.thenewrepublic.com.**

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OBAMA/CLINTON COVER IMAGE BY NANCY BURSON

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Half-Baked

The latest in global-warming denialism.

JONATHAN CHAIT

Republicans are no longer denying the scientific basis for global warming. That's good news for those of us who have grown accustomed to the continued existence of things like polar sea ice, various forms of life, and Miami. The bad news is that Republicans, having seen the light, have fallen back on the possibly even more annoying stance of simply refusing to do anything about the problem.

The new conservative stance was presaged last summer in a *National Review* cover story, "Game Plan: What Conservatives Should Do About Global Warming." The article, by Jim Manzi, began with a frank acknowledgement that global warming could no longer be denied. After this promising start, the argument swiftly degenerated. Manzi proposed "development of tactical technologies, such as carbon sequestration and cleaner-burning [oil-fueled] engines." Of course, everybody is for those things. The problem is that dirty energy sources like oil and coal are far cheaper—and will remain cheaper for a long time—unless the government somehow increases the cost of carbon emissions. This, however, is where Manzi begs to differ. "Conservatives," he writes, "should propose policies that are appropriately optimistic, science-based, and low-cost."

How, exactly, conservatives can persuade people to give up cheap energy sources without imposing a cost on them Manzi does not say. (Perhaps this is where being "optimistic" comes in.) Instead, he proceeds to a gleeful discussion of how conservatives could win votes by opposing carbon taxes—most likely by luring "old-line industrial-union members" ticked off by the soulful entreaties of Al Gore and other members of the "Hollywood and political smart set." The essay concludes on the triumphal note, "Global warming can be the first wedge issue of the 21st century."

This charming strategy can already be seen in action in Congress. Democrats, along with some Republican moderates, have proposed a package of renewable energy subsidies. To pay for it, they want to repeal a tax break for oil companies worth $1.3 billion a year. Senate Republicans have successfully filibustered the bill. What's notable here is that the Republicans are not objecting to the end of reducing carbon emissions. Instead, they're objecting to the means.

TRB
From Washington

Objection number one is that repealing the tax break to pay for renewable energy amounts to "taxing successful energy sources and subsidizing unsuccessful ones," as the Heritage Foundation puts it. This description was intended as a devastating insult, but of course it's the whole point. If renewable energy were "successful" in the pure free market, then it wouldn't need to be subsidized. "Successful" energy sources emit lots of carbon dioxide at no cost to the consumer. If you want to reduce carbon emissions, you need to find some way to factor carbon emissions into the price of energy. In its issue brief, Heritage does not question the goal of reducing carbon emissions, but neither does it say how carbon emissions could be reduced without making dirty fuel more expensive.

Objection number two is that reducing tax breaks for oil companies will cause gasoline prices to rise. Actually, the Democratic staff of the Joint Economic Committee disputes this. But, even if it were true, and the entire cost of reducing the tax break was passed on to consumers, it would result in a mere one-cent hike at the pump, which is often smaller than the difference in price between two gas stations across the street from each other. If you're not willing to inflict a one-cent hike at the pump, you're not willing to endure any sacrifice whatsoever to reduce global warming.

The true objection—objection number three, if you're counting—seems to be that removing an oil tax cut will hurt the oil companies' profits. (Which, of course, explains why the oil companies are running an extensive advertising campaign to stop the repeal, itself an odd use of their shareholder wealth given that they would probably simply pass the fee on to consumers at no cost to their bottom line.) The U.S. Chamber of Commerce complains that the repeal "singles out the oil and gas industry for punitive tax treatment." The White House has threatened a veto on the grounds that it would "target tax increases on a specific industry."

What makes this objection particularly comic is that the House isn't proposing some new tax hikes for oil companies. It's only proposing to get rid of a special tax break. A few years ago, the World Trade Organization ruled that an American tax break for exporters amounted to an illegal subsidy. So Congress, then run by Republicans, had to get rid of it. But they decided that, if they *had* to repeal a tax break for business, they would replace it with another tax break for business. So it was decided they'd create a tax break for manufacturers, on the grounds that manufacturers were struggling.

What, you ask, does this have to do with oil companies? Well, while Congress was doling out the goodies, lots of businesses decided that they wanted tax breaks, too. So, responding to the business lobby's heartfelt campaign dona—I mean, pleas, Congress generously expanded the definition of "manufacturing." Like the dictator in *Bananas* who announced that, henceforth, "All children under sixteen years old are now sixteen years old," Congress decreed that sundry pursuits as filmmaking, architecture, and, of course, oil drilling would henceforth be deemed "manufacturing" for tax purposes.

At the time this tax-cutting orgy was happening, nobody except the direct beneficiaries defended it. Liberal, moderate, and even conservative editorialists disdained the corporate porkfest. Even some lobbyists themselves felt a little queasy. (One K-Streeter confessed to *The Washington Post* that the giveaways represented "a new level of sleaze.")

If you want to know how little sacrifice most Republicans are willing to endure to make a dent in global warming, here is your answer. They're not even willing to take back a special interest subsidy—worth $1.3 billion per year, roughly 1 percent of the industry's annual profit—that nobody was willing to defend when it was enacted.

The House plan is not a solution for global warming. It's a very modest first step. On his website, John McCain boldly announces, "I believe climate change is real, I think it's devastating, I think we have to act." Great! Except that McCain has also said he supports the Republican filibuster. Welcome to the new kind of global-warming denial. ◆

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The Mall

Wiki Woman

The battle to define Hillary online.

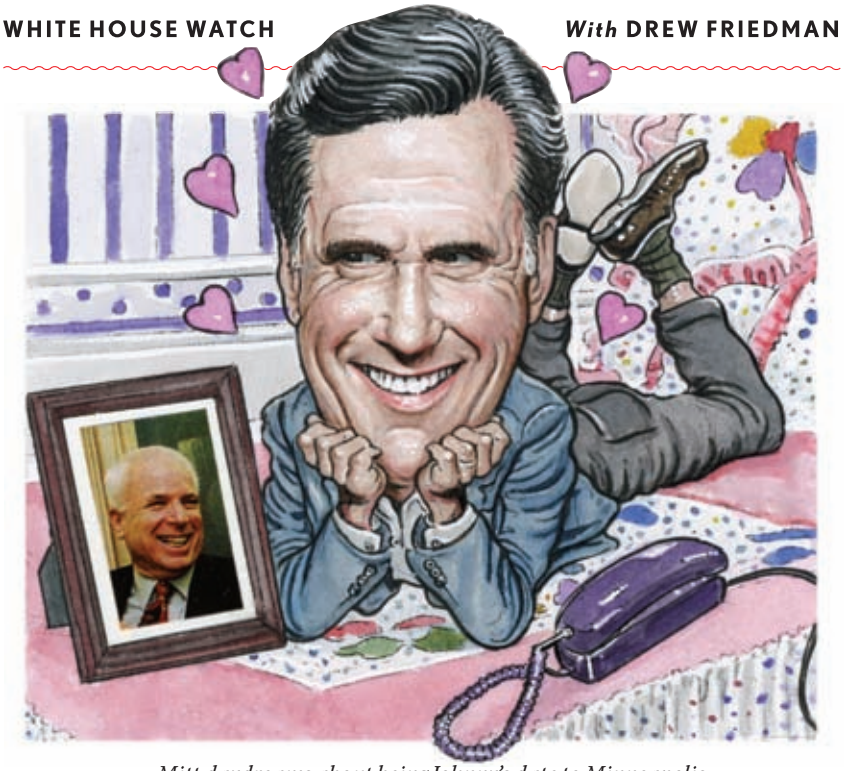
BACK WHEN we got basic information from encyclopedias instead of Wikipedia, politicians were at the mercy of the encyclopedia-writers' particular biases. Take the 1911 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Apparently controlled by smug British nationalists, it described the important Irish leader Charles Stewart Parnell as "not over-scrupulous," "repellent," "powerful for evil," and, owing to the "mental affliction of his ancestors," probably possessing a "mental equilibrium [that] was not always stable."

Wikipedia was supposed to fix this problem. Anyone can add, delete, or massage language in its online articles, and—boom!—refresh the page to see their changes appear instantly. These volunteer contributors ("editors," in Wikipedia lingo) discuss their changes on an article's associated "talk page," and eventually (or so the theory goes) merge their different perspectives on various subjects into something truly neutral. But, after you see what happens when two warring Democratic candidates are thrown to the mercy of the Wikipedians, you kind of yearn for the 1911 *Britannica*.

There was the day in February when an editor replaced a photo of Hillary on her Wikipedia page with a picture of a walrus. Then there was the day this month when a Hillary supporter changed Obama's bio so that it referred to him as "a Kenyan-American politician." But such sweepingly hostile edits are usually fixed quickly by other Wikipedia users. Often, it's the most arcane distinctions on the candidates' pages that provoke the bitterest tugs-of-war. Recently, an angry battle broke out on Hillary's page over whether to describe Clinton as "a leading candidate for the Democratic nomination" or just "a candidate," since each phrase implies a different shade of judgment on her chances. Five minutes after an Obama supporter deleted "leading" just after 11 p.m. on March 8, another editor put it back. Seven minutes after that, the word was deleted again. Some thirty minutes after that, it was put back. On it went, with different Wikipedia editors debating the significance of Hillary's delegate deficit on her talk page and accusing each other of introducing the dreaded "POV"—or "point of view," a violation of Wikipedia's most fundamental principle—into the article. At around six in the morning, completing the atmosphere of pandemonium, somebody replaced Hillary's whole page with "It has been reported that Hillary Rodham Clinton has contracted genital herpes due to sexual intercourse with an orangutan."

The battles over Hillary's and Obama's pages have been so heated because the stakes are so high. The candidates' Wikipedia pages are their second Google hits, right after their official campaign portals. And, with Clinton and Obama locked in a tight race, even the simplest adjectives seem to become powerful weapons. (By contrast, much of the editing on John McCain's page these days involves correcting formatting mistakes.) With emotions running high (at this point, is it really possible for anyone not to be "POV" on Clinton or Obama?), you would think that Wikipedia's entries on the candidates—which, after all, anyone can edit—would have long ago devolved, as the race itself pretty much has, into total chaos. But, for all the bickering, this hasn't quite happened—thanks, in part, to a 53-year-

WHITE HOUSE WATCH *With* **DREW FRIEDMAN**



Mitt daydreams about being Johnny's date to Minneapolis.

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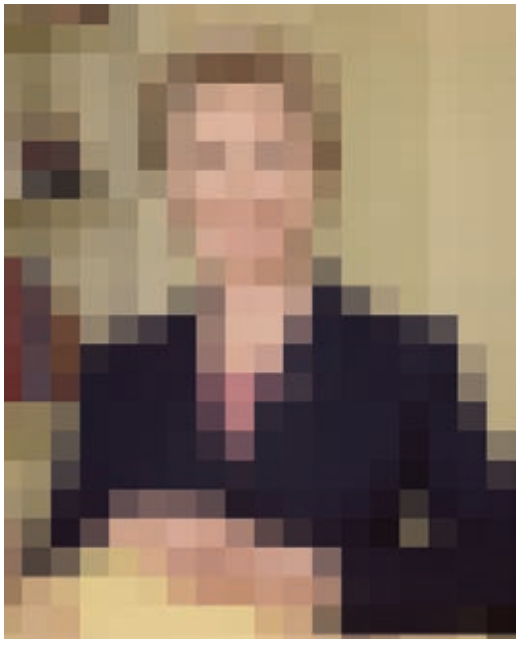
old software developer from central New Jersey named Jonathan Schilling.

Schilling is the man who protects Hillary's online self from the public's hatred. He estimates that he spends up to 15 hours per week editing Wikipedia under the name "Wasted Time R"—much of it, these days, standing watch over Hillary's page. Hardly a news event or argument over her situation goes by without Wasted Time R's input: He edited her page 77 times in the last month, mostly pruning away changes he viewed as inappropriate, such as a rant about Geraldine Ferraro or a stealthy effort to diminish Hillary's role in improving the State Children's Health Insurance Program. The fact that Schilling is married to a librarian who, he laments, "never recommends anybody use Wikipedia" (no one, *no one*, hates Wikipedia as much as librarians) does not diminish his vigilance. "You constantly have to police [the page]," he says, recalling the way Rudy Giuliani's Wikipedia article declined in quality after its protectors lost interest. "Otherwise, it diverts into a state of nature."

Yet, despite all the work he does on Hillary's page, he sometimes finds himself embarrassed to tell anybody about it. "One of my friends knows," he reveals, adding, "I told like one person at work, but she's leaving." The embarrassment might have something to do with Schilling's complex feelings about Hillary herself. It is sadly fitting that Clinton's biggest Wikipedia defender approaches her with curiosity and even empathy, but no real love. Schilling voted for her on Super Tuesday, yes, but "she's not perfect," he stresses. "I wrote a long thing about the Norman Hsu affair, which didn't make her look great." After he started editing her page in June 2005, Schilling became consumed with trying to capture her uncomfortable place in American culture, researching and writing a whole section on how she polarizes the public. At the same time, he also believes Hillary the woman is widely misunderstood. "One of the things I've tried to get across in the article was how much people were impressed by her before she got married to Bill," he says.

To develop a richly written narrative of Hillary's life, especially her time at Wellesley and Yale Law, Schilling read her memoir *Living History*, Jeff Gerth and Don Van Natta Jr.'s *Her Way*, David Brock's *The Seduction of Hillary Rodham*, Roger Morris's *Partners in Power*, Gil Troy's *Hillary Rodham Clinton: Polarizing First Lady*, and more; he tracked down details on her work with the Legal Services Corporation in an online law library; he spent a night in the Rutgers stacks digging up academic articles on polarization. After talking with him for an hour, I suspect that Jonathan Schilling, software developer, probably knows more about Hillary Clinton than her press secretary does, or perhaps even her husband.

We think of Hillary as the ultimate political hot potato, but Schilling has been relatively free to shape her article because, oddly, the substance of her life is not nearly as controversial on Wikipedia as Barack Obama's. Beyond arguments over the state of the race—like the recent fight over the word "leading"—the attacks on Hillary's page mainly take the form of crude vandalism. On February 25, the page briefly read: "[D]uring her husbands late-night romps with his secretary Hilary would sneak out and make love to the other secretary, and not the guys oh no she would make love to the female secretary." On March 6, it said: "She owns a dildo shaped like JFK." And on March 12, the entire page was replaced with: "slut!!!!!!!!!!!!!"



It's different on Obama's page, where the fans—no surprise—are more enthusiastic, the haters are more intelligent, and the arguments reflect the fact that Obama himself is still a work under construction.

"It's pretty clear that he did pray at the mosque with his stepfather," a prolific editor named Andyvphil—who recently made 32 edits on the Obama page in a single day—wrote, explaining changes he wanted to make to the language describing Obama's stepfather Lolo.

"Are you kidding me? Fortunately, it isn't only Bellwether [another editor] who sees through your obvious attempts to twist this article to suit your own personal agenda," retorted user Scjessey.

"Ah, yes. This from the dedicated and unbiased Scjessey, who insisted I couldn't mention that Trinity was Afrocentric," sneered Andyvphil.

Until recently, Bellwether, a.k.a. Kevin Bailey, was an analogue to Schilling on Obama's page. As a mild-mannered but resolute Obama fan, Bailey, a North Carolina teacher, took it upon himself to guard Obama's page. It was a harrowing job. "I woke up [one morning] and there was a whole new section [titled] 'Obama, his church, his pastor, and politics,'" he recalls. He deleted it. "The only reason to put those things in the article, in my view, is to try to do guilt by association."

The Obama page has become such a firestorm—it's had more than twice as many changes as Hillary's page in the last week, and a Wikipedia administrator restricted editing to let things cool down—that it has shattered another of Wikipedia's fundamental mores: what Wikipedians refer to as WP:AGF, or "assume good faith." Among some Obama supporters, suspicion has recently focused on Andyvphil's agenda. One editor alleged to me that he was the conservative pundit Daniel Pipes in disguise. In reality, he is Andy Phillips, a libertarian from northern California who works for UPS. The Obama supporters "have got it the way they want it, and they don't want anything changed," Phillips complains. He says he went out on a date and returned to find his access had been blocked, shortly after he was accused of "sock puppetry."

Bailey is emotionally exhausted. "The work I've been doing trying to protect the Obama article has completely sapped my energy," Bailey told me last weekend. "I've been thinking about just saying, 'You know, the hell with it. If you want to put crap in the Obama article, just do it.'" After leaving a little message of support for fellow candidate guardian Schilling, Bailey decided to take a break. "I'm tired of it," he told me. "I'm tired of the drama."

The bitterness of the fights on Obama's page could be taken as a bad sign for the candidate. But it

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may actually be Hillary's page that contains the more troubling omens. Few, if any, Hillary defenders are standing watch besides Schilling. In recent days, the vaguely deserted air of a de-gentrifying neighborhood has settled over her page, with some editors losing interest and the main excitement provided by the "slut" and "cuntbag" graffiti artists. While Obama's political past and future provoke intense argument, when I look at Hillary's relatively static page I am reminded of Schilling's description of the Rudy page at the beginning of his decline.

To test the air, I undertook my own little, highly unscientific experiment. I made a professional-looking but somewhat negative edit on each of the candidate's pages. For Hillary, I wrote a line on the hopelessness of her chances even when you count superdelegates; for Obama, I added a phrase about his loss of some white support. My Obama edit was fully scrubbed within three minutes, by an editor I'd never even seen before. My Hillary edit languished untouched for four hours until Schilling finally got around to deleting it. But, even then, he carefully preserved my skeptical text and pasted it onto the separate history-of-Hillary's-campaign page, a gesture of acceptance. It has remained there, a little wart on Hillary's Wikipedia face, untouched, ever since. *Eve Fairbanks*

Double Negative

The return of doughface liberalism.

The issue of negative campaigning and its proper bounds is now dominating the Democratic campaign. In recent weeks, the neck-and-neck race has degenerated into a miasma of trivial flaps—the source of that photo of Barack Obama in Somali garb, the "gaffes" of Samantha Power and Geraldine Ferraro, and so on—only tenuously related to the question of whether Obama or Hillary Clinton would be a better president. Each side, angling for any edge, gins up pseudo-controversies. In response, each feigns indignation, claiming the other is hitting below the belt.

These skirmishes have yielded no discernible advantage. But the bickering has, troublingly, validated a piece of conventional wisdom among a liberal commentariat that was already tilting heavily toward Obama: that Clinton is "ruthless," "vicious," even "Nixonian"—an unscrupulous appendage of her husband's "machine" (a word seldom used about the far better oiled Obama apparatus). As Obama's guru David Axelrod would have it, "They are literally trying to do anything to win this nomination." You hear it said everywhere, from blogs to high-toned op-ed pages. But this virulent meme is untrue, and—quite apart from the current contest—anyone who cares about liberalism and its future should be worried by its spread.

To begin with, the charge that Clinton is Nixonian is as scurrilous as the smears that Obama is a closet Muslim or that John McCain sired a bastard child. Her campaign, simply put, is not categorically different from any other hard-driving presidential bid, including Obama's own. It should be recalled that, back in the fall, when Obama trailed in the polls by double digits, friendly columnists positively begged him to go after the front-runner. In an October 30 debate, Obama charged that Clinton was "changing positions whenever it's politically convenient" and that "she has not been truthful" about her Social Security plans. The jibes grew so strident that Bill Richardson called a time-out in the middle of the debate, declaring, "It's pretty close to personal attacks that we don't need."

The point isn't to taunt, as if in the schoolyard, that Obama "started it"; the point is that no presidential aspirant enters the arena an innocent. Both candidates have flip-flopped, ducked questions, taken potshots, made dubious campaign promises, and spun the facts in disingenuous ways. They have done so for the same reason that fish swim and birds fly: It's in the nature and job description of politicians to do so. To plead that one or the other has done these things more, or more nefariously, is to launch a litany of tit-for-tat charges that would outrun the pages of this magazine.

Besides, objectively quantifying the cheap shots is impossible at this fraught moment, when any incident is read through the distorting lens of candidate preference. In a famous experiment from the 1950s, the public opinion analysts Hadley Cantril and Albert Hastorf had fans of Princeton and Dartmouth's football teams watch a film of a rough game between the two—in which, most egregiously, Princeton's star player was injured—and tally up the penalties. Dartmouth fans were more likely to judge the game as rough but fair, with penalties

David Cowles

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committed almost equally on both sides. Princeton fans said Dartmouth was responsible for more than two-thirds of the infractions. Team loyalty shaped or dictated perceptions. It is doing so today among Democrats and pundits.

Take a test: Did you think Clinton's "3 a.m." ad doubting Obama's readiness to handle crises was fear-mongering, rather than a valid, if slightly lurid, gambit? Did you read her "as far as I know" response to a question about Obama's religion as a shameful effort to stoke rumors rather than an unfortunate verbal tic amid a firm slap-down of those rumors? If so, you probably voted for Obama.

On the other hand, did you think Obama's health care mailers that echoed the old "Harry and Louise" ads were following the Republican playbook rather than "drawing distinctions" on the issues? Did you hear sexism when Obama spoke of Hillary's "claws com[ing] out," rather than an innocent remark? If so, you no doubt prefer Clinton.

This (very) partial list of mini-controversies may not persuade either aspirant's enthusiasts that this year's contest does not exactly pit Richard Nixon against Mahatma Gandhi, whomever you would cast in either role. But it should lead us all to think twice about feeling confident in our candidate's moral superiority—and especially about slinging terms like "Nixonian." Lines exist in politics that shouldn't be crossed, but, unlike Tricky Dick, Hillary Clinton hasn't tapped her rival's phones or broken into his psychiatrist's office. She hasn't stolen his debate briefing book or convened a mob of rioters to shut down a vote count. She hasn't used the machinery of impeachment for partisan gain. It's been just words.

None of Clinton's alleged offenses even departs from historical norms. Some detractors have cried foul at her hints—and they've been only hints—that she might woo some of Obama's pledged delegates. But, until recently, when primaries and caucuses became the norm, jockeying for delegates was standard practice, and, even in recent decades, it's hardly been unheard of. Late in the 1980 primaries, President Jimmy Carter had all but sewn up the nomination, but challenger Ted Kennedy stayed in the race, hoping that, if he won some key primaries—as he did—he could peel off Carter's supporters, who might not want to back a likely loser in the fall. Kennedy continued to pursue delegates even after the party rules committee barred first-ballot switching at the convention. In 1984, Gary Hart, despite losing in the primaries, planned a challenge to the legitimacy of roughly 500 of front-runner Walter Mondale's delegates, though he ultimately relented. If no Democrat has tried flipping delegates since then, it's only because the races haven't been close enough for the option to be worth considering.

Nor should Clinton's tactics be faulted for giving ammunition to the Republicans for the fall campaign. Harping on a rival's weaknesses is part and parcel of any campaign. Al Gore denounced Michael Dukakis's prison furlough program in 1988. Bill Bradley branded Gore a serial exaggerator in 2000. Whether these attacks serve to toughen or soften up the eventual nominee can't be proved either way. But historically Republicans have needed no help in finding ways to bash Democrats. And, while it's not the job of journalists and intellectuals to look after the Democrats' interests, a single standard should prevail. If questioning Obama's readiness for prime time is to be shunned lest it abet John McCain, Democrats should likewise avoid the potentially destructive notion that Clinton is an unusually dirty campaigner.

The most compelling reason to stop the demonization of Clinton is a philosophical one. For the claim that Clinton's attacks are somehow beyond the pale rests on and revives a distressing view of liberalism, politics, and power that, only recently, liberals seemed quite united in overcoming.

With its emphasis on fairness, openness, and playing by the rules, liberalism has always fostered an ambivalence about the exercise of power. A well-placed concern not to let ends justify means has often led to a misplaced sacrifice of ends to means. Fears of power's abuse have often constrained its use. In the 1950s, when Adlai Stevenson carried the Democrats' standard, party chairman Stephen Mitchell argued that liberals had to respond to the underhanded tactics of men like Nixon in kind. In the opinion journals, he was rebutted. If won on such terms, asked William Lee Miller in *The Reporter*, "then whose is the victory?" In contrast, Miller argued, "if we stick by what we believe, we may not win as often, but when we do we shall know what the victory means." That's how Stevenson ran—and lost. Since the 1980s, Democrats have explained away defeats by arguing that Republicans won only by playing dirty—a rationalization that is both inaccurate and self-deluding.

Yet, in contrast to this "doughface" liberalism, as Arthur Schlesinger famously termed it, another liberal tradition also exists. Under Franklin Roosevelt, wrote Schlesinger, "American liberalism . . . had a positive and confident ring. It has stood for responsibility and for achievement." FDR and the New Deal's lieutenants respected fair play and fair procedures, but they put results first. They understood that politics is, inherently, a field of combat, not for the faint-hearted.

John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, and Robert Kennedy—than whom no one was called "ruthless" more often—grasped the importance of confidently using power for progressive ends. They knew that vanquishing adversaries is essential to winning elections, implementing policies, and improving people's lives. No liberal should excuse the occasions when these men crossed inviolable lines, but none should forget either that the raft of legislation that Washington produced in the 1960s was not a product of chummy bipartisan committees and painless consensus-building.

One of the few bright spots of the Bush presidency was the rediscovery of this liberal tradition. The Florida recount fight, the post–September 11 patriotism politics, the rush to war in Iraq, and the swift-boating of John Kerry—all united liberals in disdain for the spinelessness of so many of their leaders. A hundred score op-eds demanded more Democratic mettle. The netroots gathered force not from any well-formed policy agenda but from a desire to fire up the base. E.J. Dionne Jr.'s 2004 book *Stand Up, Fight Back: Republican Toughs, Democratic Wimps, and the Politics of Revenge* was just the most pointedly titled of a shelf-load of tracts arguing for a liberalism that didn't regard an appetite for battle and a compassionate spirit as antithetical.

Recently, though, the Bush administration's implosion and the Democrats' capture of Congress eased the demand for a fighter. The launch of Obama's campaign, with its Stevensonian appeals to our better natures, dovetailed with a new—and complacent—optimism that the Democrats would regain the White House in 2008 all but inevitably. It's as if the angry populism from which Bush and the right have long drawn strength has vanished from the scene. And, while Obama has shown his own ability to fight fiercely, he has all along retained the posture of the reluctant warrior. Accordingly, he wins

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plaudits from an elite that clings to—or has reverted to—an ideal of bloodless political warfare. In contrast, when, last December, Clinton, after being pummeled for a month, announced, "Now the fun part starts"—heralding her plans to strike back—she was trashed for taking pleasure in the fisticuffs. The climate brooks no place for a happy warrior.

None of this is to celebrate the current tenor of the race. Good people on both sides have been needlessly caught in the crossfire. The demand for heads to roll whenever an aide misspeaks has reached a pitch that is dangerous, not for any singular ugliness but for its pettiness. And the press, to its discredit, lets these campaign-generated pseudo-events shape its coverage. But, as noted recently by James Carville—no stranger to political combat—campaigning is training for governing, preparing candidates to "get hit, stand strong, and, if necessary, hit back." Without a certain humility and hesitation about hitting back, neither Clinton nor Obama would be a good liberal. But, without the requisite readiness to do so, neither would be a very good politician either—or, more to the point, a very good president.

David Greenberg

Legal Bondage

Why we like restrictions on sex.

The day of Eliot Spitzer's ignominious resignation, I reread one of the most splenetic dissents in the recent history of the Supreme Court: the jeremiad Antonin Scalia wrote in response to the *Lawrence* v. *Texas* ruling that legalized sodomy. Scalia argued that *Lawrence* would release a wave of relativism that would ultimately sweep away laws banning "bigamy, same-sex marriage, adult incest, prostitution, masturbation, adultery, fornication, bestiality, and obscenity." Or, as he put it: "This effectively decrees the end of all morals legislation."

Watching the end of Spitzer's political career, however, I couldn't help feeling that Scalia had it entirely wrong. Despite the best efforts of some libertarians, the days of morals legislation are hardly over. Not only do the courts seem to be in no hurry to strike down these laws—the American public refuses to rush down the slippery slope that Scalia described.

Cock-fighting, idleness, adultery, incest, polygamy: These kinds of activities have long been banned by so-called morals legislation, that is, prohibitions that can't be justified as a means of protecting health and safety but instead are vehicles for protecting the collective virtue of communities. The laws in question targeted not only the public manifestation of this conduct—such as the taverns and brothels and bowling alleys that, as Richard Epstein has noted, were shut down for promoting idleness—but also the private conduct itself. The Supreme Court recognized the power of the states and Congress to regulate public morals in 1913, when it upheld the White Slave Traffic Act, or Mann Act, which banned the transport of women across state lines "for the purpose of prostitution or debauchery, or for any other immoral purpose." In upholding the law, the Court declared the promotion of morality one of the government's most important duties.

The sexual revolution struck a blow to the very roots of this concept. In 1957, the British parliamentary Committee on Homosexual Offenses and Prostitution published the Wolfenden Report, which concluded that the function of criminal law "is to preserve public order and decency"—including safeguarding against the exploitation and corruption of the young and vulnerable—but with an important caveat: "It is not the duty of the law to concern itself with immorality as such." In response to the Wolfenden Report, the political theorist H.L.A. Hart famously insisted that law could only ban immoral acts that caused tangible harm to others. He said society could outlaw public acts of prostitution, such as streetwalking, as an affront to public decency, but it wouldn't be permissible to ban purely private acts of prostitution. Hart's arguments were countered by the social conservative Lord Devlin, who insisted that society undoubtedly had the power to ban conduct because of moral disapproval and indeed would collapse if it failed to do so under some circumstances.

In smart circles, it has long been conventional wisdom that Hart won this argument. And Anthony Kennedy's sweeping opinion in the *Lawrence* decision seemed to affirm his victory. "Liberty gives substantial protection to adult persons in deciding how to conduct their private lives in matters pertaining to sex," Kennedy wrote. "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life."

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Kennedy's opinion, of course, caused Scalia's head to explode and provoked his alarmist warnings about the impending demise of morals legislation. He seemed especially concerned not that there were masturbation laws on the books but that suddenly they seemed imperiled! (In case you were wondering, these laws prohibit paying someone else to pleasure you.) After *Lawrence*, there were all sorts of defendants who tried to test the constitutionality of other morals laws. In 2004, a streetwalker in Peoria who unwisely agreed to perform oral sex on an undercover police officer challenged her conviction for prostitution. After *Lawrence*, she insisted, private sexual conduct between consenting adults was constitutionally protected. But an Illinois appeals court rejected her argument, emphasizing that commercial sex could be distinguished from private consensual sex. Other

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civil libertarians tried to challenge an Alabama ban on the distribution of sex toys. If there is a constitutional right to engage in private sexual conduct, they argued, there should be a right to use (and buy) sex toys. But, in 2001, a federal appeals court rejected their argument, holding that the state has a legitimate interest in promoting "public morality"—even if that only involves being offended by someone else's private conduct.

It's now obvious, in short, that Scalia's predictions were alarmist. Morals legislation is alive and well. The problem with sodomy laws wasn't that they were based on moral disapproval; the problem was that the public consensus about the immorality of sodomy had collapsed. By contrast, the reaction to the Spitzer scandal shows how intense the moral disapproval of prostitution remains. On talk shows and in op-eds, Spitzer was denounced not for victimizing Ashley Dupré—the standard feminist argument for banning prostitution—but for showing contempt for his wife and daughters. His disrespect for his family was exacerbated by his flamboyant hypocrisy.

In general, moral disapproval of prostitution is stronger than of extramarital affairs, where there's at least some possible emotional rationale for cheating. That's why it tends to be easier for politicians to survive infidelity scandals than ones involving prostitution. Senator David Vitter weathered his prostitution scandal because Republicans were more interested in keeping his Senate seat than publicly shaming him; but, after using the same escort service, Randall Tobias had to resign as head of the U.S. Agency for International Development because of his hypocrisy in requiring aid recipients to take an anti-prostitution pledge. All this confirms one of Lord Devlin's insights: There are few hard and fast boundaries between criminal and moral law; instead, the boundaries shift pragmatically from case to case with the intensity of public outrage at the alleged instance of immorality.

So Hart may have won the initial debate over public morality, but Devlin has prevailed over time. Americans are infinitely tolerant of moral transgression, except where they're not. When confronted with a hypocritical whoring pol, they want an old-fashioned shaming punishment. Despite Scalia's suggestions to the contrary, politicians inclined toward adult incest, bestiality, or commercial masturbation should expect no less.

Jeffrey Rosen

Trade Secrets

The real problem with NAFTA.

In the weeks leading up to the March 4 primary in Ohio, a new insult entered the increasingly caustic vocabularies of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton: hypocrite. Hoping to curry favor in a state that has shed thousands of manufacturing jobs in recent years, each attacked the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the treaty that lowered barriers to commerce between the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Their disdain for NAFTA was such that both promised the dramatic step of withdrawing from the treaty if Mexico and Canada were unwilling to renegotiate its labor and environmental provisions. But each also accused the other of secretly backing the treaty. Obama alleged that, in 2004, Clinton had called NAFTA a "boon" to the economy, while Clinton pointed to a report that Obama's chief economic adviser had reassured Canadian officials that the candidate's tough talk on the treaty was just "political positioning."

The primary ended with a decisive victory for Clinton, but the charges of hypocrisy are likely to persist. Not only because the campaign continues to Pennsylvania, which has lost over 200,000 manufacturing jobs since 2001, but because they're true. There are few policy wonks or economists, including those supporting or advising Clinton and Obama, who believe what the candidates are saying about the treaty. That's because NAFTA is not the main reason for the recent loss of industrial jobs in the Midwest. It's not even the second most important reason. It comes in at best a very distant third to competition from low-wage China and other Asian countries and to the management mistakes of U.S. firms, particularly in the auto industry. Prominent Democrats who are not running for office recognize that. Ted Strickland—the governor of Ohio, who campaigned for Clinton—dismissed the threat of NAFTA: "The problem now is Southeast Asia. It's China," he said. Privately, even labor officials agree.

To be sure, NAFTA hasn't lived up to the promises made by its original backers. But its most important failing has little to do with U.S. factory jobs being lured south; rather, the treaty's problems stem from its unforeseen effects on the Mexican economy—particularly its agricultural sector. If the candidates are really concerned about the harm NAFTA has done to American workers, they ought to start by talking about the harm it's done to Mexican farmers.

NAFTA, which was implemented on January 1, 1994, either eliminated or phased out tariffs on manufactured goods and agriculture, removed Mexican restrictions on foreign investment, and generally limited what Mexico could do to protect its farms and businesses. NAFTA proponents argued that increased U.S. investment would raise Mexican wages. Rising wages would reduce the incentive to emigrate and, along with reduced tariffs, would create demand for American-made products. Rising U.S. exports would lead to an increase in U.S. jobs—200,000 during the first two years, President Bill Clinton predicted.

Over time, NAFTA has not lived up to such expectations, but nor has it validated the apocalyptic fears of labor unions and Ross Perot, who prophesied a "giant sucking sound" as U.S. jobs went south. Admittedly, some U.S. firms had transferred their operations to Mexico during the 1990s (although the 1994 peso crisis, which drove down Mexican wages, was a more attractive lure than NAFTA itself), but, at the treaty's ten-year anniversary, economists not identified with either side in the raging debate estimated that U.S. job losses had been nearly offset or cancelled by job gains. In 2004, labor economist Sandra Polaski described the "net effect on jobs in the United States" as "miniscule."

That's not to say that American manufacturers have not suffered. From 2001 to 2007, Ohio lost more than 200,000 manufacturing jobs, while the United States as a whole lost well over 3 million. But there is no evidence that NAFTA drove this job loss. In fact, for the nearly eight years after NAFTA took effect, Ohio's manufacturing employment remained fairly constant, at about 1.1 million workers. But, in 2001, a recession began to squeeze the U.S. economy. And, that same year, Beijing's entry into the World Trade Organization accelerated competition from low-wage Chinese manufacturing. Alan Tonelson, a research fellow at the U.S. Business and Industrial Council Educational Foundation who has been an outspoken critic

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of NAFTA, says, "We have 1,500 member companies, and I can't remember the last time anyone mentioned Mexico as a problem. China is the main problem." The Alliance for American Manufacturing, established last year by the United Steelworkers and U.S. steel companies, toured Ohio during the primary "trying to make sure that a convenient fixation on NAFTA does not preclude debate on the very real problem of China." In other words, the people most affected by the loss of jobs don't blame the treaty that Clinton and Obama have scapegoated.

The data support their emphasis on China. In 1997, U.S. imports from China were 73 percent of imports from Mexico; last year, imports from China were 154 percent of those from Mexico. According to business analyst Charles McMillion, while the U.S. manufacturing trade deficit with Mexico remained fairly level between 2001 and 2004, our deficit with China doubled to $167 billion.

There is, however, one way in which NAFTA has stressed the American workforce: by increasing the flood of illegal immigrants willing to work for less money. In 1993, the treaty's proponents claimed that NAFTA would actually help keep Mexicans in their native country by increasing economic opportunities there, but, according to the Pew Hispanic Center, annual illegal immigration from Mexico jumped 54 percent in the few years after the treaty was ratified, from 260,000 in 1994 to 400,000 a year from 1995 to 2000. And it has continued growing after that.

There were a number of reasons why. The peso crisis widened the gap between what Mexicans could make at home and what they could make in the United States. And, after 2001, competition from China stymied the growth of Mexican manufacturing and suppressed wages. Employment in the *maquiladoras*—the border factories that import materials from the United States for assembly and then send them back—has actually declined since 2000.

But, just as important, by phasing out government protections for the country's 3.2 million small farmers, NAFTA drove many of them northward. According to Laura Carlsen of the Center for International Policy, as cheap American foodstuffs flooded Mexico's markets and as U.S. agribusiness moved in, 1.1 million small farmers—and 1.4 million other Mexicans dependent upon the farm sector—were driven out of work between 1993 and 2005. Wages dropped so precipitously that today the income of a farm laborer is one-third that of what it was before NAFTA. As jobs disappeared and wages sank, many of these rural Mexicans emigrated, swelling the ranks of the 12 million illegal immigrants living incognito and competing for low-wage jobs in the United States.

Of course, the rise in U.S. agricultural exports has delighted American farmers, even as it has infuriated their Mexican counterparts (on January 31, hundreds of thousands of them poured into Mexico City to protest NAFTA). That may be why the presidential candidates have not complained about this aspect of the treaty. Instead, Clinton and Obama have promised to renegotiate NAFTA's associated labor and environmental agreements, claiming that they can save U.S. manufacturing jobs by making Mexico live up to international standards. "I would immediately have a trade timeout, and I would take that time to try to fix NAFTA by making it clear that we'll have core labor and environmental standards in the agreement," Clinton said during the candidates' February 26 debate in Cleveland. Obama concurred, "I will make sure that we renegotiate, in the same way that Senator Clinton talked about."

It's hard to see how this would provide a big boost to American workers. Mexico's—and Canada's—labor laws are actually more progressive than U.S. laws. Mexico, for instance, has ratified 78 of the International Labor Organization's core labor standards, while the United States has ratified only 14. Besides which, in an interview with Kevin Hall from the McClatchy newspapers, representatives from neither the Clinton nor the Obama campaign could name a single dispute in which tougher labor or environmental regulations would have benefited American workers and manufacturers.

Still, the treaty could be improved. For 15 years, policy experts have suggested that, instead of seeking a trade arrangement aimed solely at benefiting U.S. companies in the short run, the United States should do for Mexico what the European Union did first for Spain, Portugal, and Greece and is now seeking to do for Eastern Europe: use development aid and temporary protections to upgrade dramatically its economy and infrastructure, particularly its educational system, thereby making Mexico more attractive to Mexicans. Princeton sociologist Douglas Massey has argued that, "if the money devoted to U.S. border enforcement were instead channeled into structural adjustment in Mexico, as was done by the EU for Spain, unauthorized migration would likely disappear as a significant demographic and political issue in North America." And that would ease pressures on American workers.

But politicians—and presidential candidates in particular—are understandably wary of proposals that smack of foreign aid. They would much rather use their opposition to NAFTA to demonstrate that they understand the pitfalls of globalization. "NAFTA is a symbol to the people who are dislocated or in fear of losing their jobs, and it has achieved a significance well beyond its current importance," explains Strickland. But, in singling out NAFTA as the cause of America's industrial woes, Clinton and Obama are stoking voter anger while impeding any attempt to address the treaty's real problems. Which makes them worse than hypocrites; it makes them demagogues.

John B. Judis

Family Values

What the pope can teach Democrats about immigration.

During the 2004 presidential election, Bishop Michael Sheridan of Colorado Springs and Archbishop Ray Burke of St. Louis let it be known that they would deny pro-choice politicians communion. It was a pointed rebuke to the first Catholic Democratic nominee since JFK, John Kerry. Turning the altar rail into a battlefront in the culture wars was unprecedented, but the Vatican did not take any steps to rein in the bishops—in fact, a later memo from Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith seemed to support their actions. For Kerry, Catholic opposition may have been fatal: He lost the Catholic vote in Ohio 44–55, a six-point drop from Al Gore's numbers there in 2000. If Kerry had managed to hold on to those six points, he would have won in Ohio by 41,000 votes—and gone on to win the country.

So it's understandable that the pro-choice Democratic contenders for 2008 might look toward the impending U.S. tour of the former Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, with trepidation. Luckily for them, however, Benedict won't make waves with his pronouncements on abortion—that's old news. Instead, the trip's most eye-catching theme will be Benedict's plea for compassion toward immigrants, culminating in the pope's final U.S. event, when

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CENTRIFUGAL VIOLENCE

Since seizing power in a 1989 coup, the government of Omar Al Bashir has terrorized Sudan's outlying regions and neighbors—killing or displacing millions, all in the name of maximizing its own influence. The events of recent months in Darfur and elsewhere show that this strategy has not changed.

- Events of the past few months
- Population movements of the past few months
- Violence initiated or exacerbated by the Sudanese regime since it took power in 1989

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Dark Red Arrows

Chad: In the first week of February, Chadian rebels, backed by Khartoum, attacked Ndjamena in a bid to overthrow the government of Idriss Déby.

Abyei: Nicholas Kristof of *The New York Times* recently reported that 16,000 Khartoum-backed militia members have amassed north of Abyei, a disputed border region that figures to be a flashpoint if the North-South civil war resumes. Several hundred people have been killed in clashes between these militias and the main southern opposition group since November.

Silea, Sirba, and Abu Suruj: On February 8, the Sudanese government bombed three villages in western Darfur. A week after the attacks, only 300 of Silea's 20,000 residents remained.

Aro Sharow and Jebel Moon: The government followed up its February 8 attacks with air raids on Aro Sharow and Jebel Moon. An estimated 20,000 civilians are currently trapped in Jebel Moon without access to humanitarian aid.

Gray Arrows

Darfur/Chad: The United Nations reported that 13,000 Darfuri refugees entered Chad during February. Among them were those who fled following Khartoum's attacks on Silea, Sirba, and Abu Suruj.

Chad/Cameroon: The rebel attack on Ndjamena caused 20,000 Chadians to flee into Cameroon.

Light Red Arrows

Uganda: Throughout the 1990s, Khartoum sheltered and supplied the Lord's Resistance Army, a Ugandan rebel movement notorious for its enlistment of child soldiers. In return, the LRA helped Khartoum terrorize Southern Sudan.

Southern Sudan: The Second Sudanese Civil War, fought between the North and South from 1983 to 2005, was one of the bloodiest Africa has known, killing 2 million people and displacing 4 million.

Darfur: The genocide in Darfur, which began in 2003, has killed at least 400,000 people and displaced 2 million.

Northern Sudan: Scheduled to open later this year and funded partly with Chinese money, the Merowe Dam will displace at least 50,000 residents of northern Sudan. Khartoum has proposed building more dams in the region, angering historically marginalized Nubians and other northern Sudanese. The government has also arrested Nubian leaders and last June fired on a protest of 5,000, killing four. A rebel group called the Kush Liberation Front has announced its intention to fight Khartoum. "They want to cut us from our roots and flood all of Nubia and its history," one Nubian farmer told the *Los Angeles Times* last summer.

Eastern Sudan: Eastern Sudan has long been overshadowed by Darfur and the South, but it is the poorest region of the country. Up to 5,000 people were killed there in fighting between rebels and the government in the ten years before they signed a peace agreement in 2006.

Chad: For years, Khartoum has supported Chadian rebels. Chad's president (no angel himself) backs Darfuri rebels. The escalating proxy warfare between the two nations threatens to further destabilize the entire region.

Ben Crair

he will pray the rosary in 23 different languages for an audience of 3,000 immigrants inside a hangar at JFK Airport in New York. Benedict's liberal approach to immigration actually puts him to the left of both potential Democratic nominees—and it points a way for Democrats to diffuse this potentially dangerous issue.

Three years ago, when the papal conclave elected Ratzinger as pope, liberal Catholics around the world despaired. A vocal critic of rock music, feminism, leftist "liberation theology," and all forms of moral relativism, Ratzinger was nicknamed "Der Panzerkardinal." But, when it comes to immigration, the Catholic belief in the inherent dignity of every human being and the priority the Church places on keeping families together pushed Benedict leftward. In 2006, to celebrate the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, the pope began his statement by recalling that Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were refugees when they fled from Herod, then encouraged his followers to work toward keeping immigrant families together. For the 2008 celebration, Benedict issued a letter that focused on the needs of young immigrants, calling on the Church's host communities "to welcome the young people and the very young with their parents with sympathy, and to try and understand the vicissitudes of their lives" so that the immigrants "can overcome the obstacles and the material and spiritual difficulties [they] encounter."

In the United States in particular, the Catholic Church has long sided with immigrants over those who would restrict their movement. Benedict's predecessor, John Paul II, gave a major address in 1999 on church policy toward Latino immigrants in the United States, saying that the Church is "committed to spare no effort in developing her own pastoral strategy among these immigrant people, in order to help them settle in their new land and to foster a welcoming attitude among the local population, in the belief that a mutual openness will bring enjoyment to all." The American bishops have proven a strong lobbying force for immigration rights: In 2006, the Church helped organize a series of nationwide protests to argue for more liberal immigration reform; Cardinal Sean O'Malley told a crowd assembled on Boston Common that "the immigration policy we need in the U.S. must be based on the cornerstone of respect for the dignity of every human person."

Of course, in arguing for immigration reform in America, Catholics are protecting Catholic Latinos, the demographic future of the Church. With trends in U.S. birthrates favoring Hispanics, Catholic support for immigration into the United States has some immediate benefits in terms of pure numbers.

But there's a more important reason why the Church is siding with Latino immigrants: the fear that restrictions on immigration will tear families asunder. Catholic social thought always begins with the family. In most instances, this leads to political conservatism, as with abortion and gay marriage. But, in the case of immigration reform, the vital importance of the family as a single, Catholic unit

Lou Beach

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means that Catholics are on the other side of the spectrum entirely.

During Benedict's U.S. trip, which takes him from Washington, D.C., to New York over six days in mid-April, the pope is expected to speak about immigration when he meets with the American bishops and possibly when he makes remarks at the White House. His two large public Masses could also see him address the issue, and both will be given in Spanish as well as English.

If Benedict highlights immigration during his major addresses, Democrats would do well to take notes. The pope's pro-family stance is extremely resonant with Latino voters, many of whom come from families with mixed legal status: a wife with a green card and an undocumented husband, for example, or undocumented parents with citizen children. Fine-tuning the Democratic appeal to Latinos could represent quite the electoral trove in November: Latinos have turned out in record numbers for the 2008 primaries.

Moreover, keeping families together is not just the principal concern of Latinos, but an idea evangelicals and white ethnic Catholics respond positively to as well. The idea of separating families is deeply repugnant to many voters. After a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services factory raid in a conservative town in Arkansas in 2006, *The Boston Globe* reported that neighbors contacted lawmakers to fight deportations and collected food and clothing for the arrested workers' families: "Rather than feel reassured that immigration laws were being enforced, many believed their community had been disrupted."

Consider all the virtues of following the pope's pro-family plea: What's more humanizing than portraying immigrants as mothers and fathers and sons and daughters? What's more un-American than ripping the very fabric of families? For so long, conservatives have successfully portrayed immigrants as "aliens" and "criminals," beyond sympathy. With a genius stroke of rhetoric, Benedict has shown Democrats how to beat back these attacks. In contrast to the harm the Church inflicted on Kerry, this surely counts as papal absolution.

Michael Sean Winters

Michael Sean Winters's book, Left at the Altar: How the Democrats Lost the Catholics and How the Catholics Can Save the Democrats, will be published in June.

AGE OF WONDER

The most recent cycle of work by photographer Gregory Crewdson, a master of American gothic, will be on display at the Luhring Augustine Gallery in New York from April 5 to May 3. In his new series, Crewdson captures both the intensity and the solitude of small-town life with cinematic flair and a wicked sense of humor. This photo is "Untitled," from the 1998 Twilight Series.

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James Victore

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Slouching Toward Denver

The Democratic death march.

NOAM SCHEIBER

When Democrats contemplate the apocalypse these days, they have visions of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton slugging it out à la Ted Kennedy and Jimmy Carter at the 1980 convention. The campaign's current trajectory is, in fact, alarmingly similar to the one that produced that disastrous affair. Back then, Carter had built up a delegate lead with early wins in Iowa, New Hampshire, and several Southern states. But, as the primary season dragged on, Kennedy began pocketing big states and gaining momentum. Once all the voting ended and Kennedy came up short, he eyed the New York convention as a kind of Hail Mary.

Any candidate trailing at the convention must employ divisive tactics, almost by definition. For example, much of the bitterness in 1980 arose from the floor votes Kennedy engineered to drive a wedge between Carter and his delegates. At one point, Kennedy forced a vote on whether each state's delegation should be split equally between men and women. Carter counted many feminists among his delegates, but the campaign initially opposed the measure so as to deny Kennedy a victory. "You had women who were with Jimmy Carter who were crying on the floor," recalls Joe Trippi, then a young Kennedy organizer.

The Kennedy strategy worked both too well and not well enough. Kennedy won many of the floor votes thanks to Carter's unwillingness to squeeze conflicted delegates. He captivated the rank and file with his mythic "Dream shall never die" speech—a stark contrast to Carter's ham-handed rhetorical style. (In his own speech, Carter famously confused former vice president Hubert Humphrey with Horatio Hornblower, a fictional character from a British book series.) But, for all the maneuvering, the delegate tally barely budged. Kennedy won the convention's hearts and minds; Carter locked up the nomination.

One of the iconic images from that episode has the two men on a crowded stage in Madison Square Garden. Carter edges toward Kennedy expectantly, hoping for a symbolic show of unity. But Kennedy's back is turned, and he's moving in the opposite direction. Capping four days of intramural mud-wrestling, it perfectly captured the party's rift heading toward the general election. Carter himself later lamented news accounts portraying the scene as "an indication that the split in our ranks had not healed." "This accurate impression was quite damaging to our campaign," he wrote in his memoir, *Keeping Faith*.

As it happens, it's possible that Kennedy never intended the cold-shoulder treatment. The original idea was for Kennedy and Carter to appear alone together at the podium. But, thanks to some horrific Manhattan traffic, Kennedy didn't show up until legions of Carter supporters had flooded the stage. He may have been disoriented amid all the chaos. "To this day, I don't know that there was deliberate effort by Kennedy to snub Carter. It was just a big confusion," says Bill Carrick, one of Kennedy's floor managers. "The lesson is that, if you go into conventions, you're going to have messes. These are not manageable processes."

With little chance that either candidate this time around can clinch the nomination at the polls, it's not inconceivable that Democrats will re-enact this spectacle in Denver this August. (One direct link: Clinton operative Harold Ickes oversaw Kennedy's convention effort in 1980 and would likely oversee Hillary's.) The sequel could be even more damaging. It's true that the ideological gulf separating Kennedy and Carter doesn't divide Obama and Clinton. But, precisely because the substantive differences are so small, the temptation to court delegates along racial and gender lines would be even greater. And the sense of alienation among the losers would be overwhelming. Says former Al Gore campaign manager (and undecided superdelegate) Donna Brazile: "I don't have the 1980 experience, but that was two white men. This is a woman and a black. What's different about this fight is that, when they attack each other, supporters feel like they're attacking them personally." Remember the recent firestorm over Geraldine Ferraro's comment that, "If Obama was a white man, he would not be in this position"? Well, imagine that flap playing out continuously over four days among hundreds of people with no other news to displace it, and you begin to see the problem.

The good news is that an ugly convention fight is highly preventable. The one advantage of a scenario that's both completely hair-raising and utterly foreseeable is that everyone has an incentive to stop it. The bad news is what's *not* preventable: a contest that rolls into June. Even without a messy convention, the current trajectory of the primary campaign could easily destroy the party's White House prospects.

Democrats have never been known for Spock-like rationality, but even they see the logic of avoiding a convention fiasco. "It's in nobody's interest in the Democratic Party for that to happen," says Mike Feldman, another former Gore aide. "There is a mechanism in place—built into the process—to avoid that." That mechanism, such as it is, involves an en masse movement of uncommitted superdelegates to the perceived winner of the primaries. Almost everything you hear from such people suggests this will happen in time. "I think once we have the elected delegate count, things will move fairly quickly," says Representative Chris Van Hollen, who oversees the party's House campaign committee. Increasingly, there is even agreement on the metric by which a winner would be named. Just about every superdelegate and party operative I spoke with endorsed Nancy Pelosi's recent suggestion that pledged delegates should matter most.

Assuming Feldman and Van Hollen are right, that means Democrats won't wait much past June 3—currently the last day on the primary calendar—before crowning a nominee. At the same time, it means there's very little chance of ending the contest sooner. Undecided superdelegates on Capitol Hill, along with party elders like Pelosi, Gore, and Harry Reid, "don't want to be seen as elites coming in and overturning the will of the people," says one senior House aide. A Senate staffer says his boss "thinks this give and take is natural, it will be

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helpful in the end." "That's a view held by a majority of these guys who have been through the cut and thrust of politics," he adds. Which means early June it is.

The problem is that each day Clinton and Obama spend consumed with the other is a day that moves John McCain closer to the White House. McCain's biggest asset is his political brand, which evokes a straight-talking, party-bucking reformer. Among his biggest liabilities is the suspicion he inspires among conservatives thanks to these same attributes. McCain apparently plans to spend the next few months making nice with his base. But anything he accomplishes on this front clearly diminishes his swing-voter appeal and, therefore, his chances in November.

Ideally, the Democrats would be exploiting this tension like mad. They would highlight the anti-Catholic, anti-gay ravings of John Hagee, the evangelical minister whose endorsement McCain recently accepted. They would ridicule his chumminess with supply-side Neanderthals like Jack Kemp and his flip-flop on the Bush tax cuts. They'd dwell on McCain's less-noticed association with crony-capitalists during his tenure as Commerce Committee chairman.

Instead, something close to the opposite is happening. McCain's courtship of the lunatic right and his ties to K Street have largely been hidden from view, while the Democrats' dirty laundry has been aired for swing voters. The upshot for Democrats has not been good. In late February, a Gallup poll showed Obama leading McCain among independents by 15 points. By March 6, a *Newsweek* poll put *McCain* up ten points among this group—and that was before Jeremiah Wright weighed in. Hillary went from down five to down 15 among independents during the same time.

A quick look at some recent campaign coverage sheds light on why this is happening. On March 12, Ferraro and the racially polarized Mississippi primary were A-1 news in *The Washington Post*. It wasn't until page A-6 that you stumbled across a story about McCain's ties to the parent company of Airbus, the Boeing rival to whom the Pentagon recently handed a lucrative contract. The second story could have muddied McCain's reformist credentials, but it barely caused a ripple on cable or the blogosphere.

McCain has no doubt stumbled while trying to consolidate GOP support. He prompted some grumbling with his recent appointment of former Hewlett Packard CEO Carly Fiorina, a moderate Republican with little history of party activism, to head Victory '08, a key campaign committee. But there's evidence that, on balance, he's well ahead of schedule. Since Super Tuesday, three-quarters of Republicans have routinely proclaimed themselves satisfied with McCain as their nominee.

If McCain winds up facing Obama, he'll enjoy yet another advantage: a nominee weakened by attacks from a fellow Democrat. "Clinton hit a raw nerve several weeks ago when she said she had thirty-something years of experience, McCain had twenty- to thirty-something years, and Barack Obama had a speech," says Representative Artur Davis, an Obama supporter. The suggestion that Obama isn't ready to be commander-in-chief is "unusually corrosive," Davis complains. Indeed, when I asked various Republican and neutral Democratic operatives to name the most damaging twist in the primaries, most cited this same critique. "It's very good messaging—that he's not fit to be commander-in-chief," crowed one Republican strategist. "When you get the Democrats saying it, that's kind of the nuke in the whole thing." One of his Democratic counterparts was even more blunt: "It's one thing for John McCain to say [Obama's] not as muscular. It's another thing to have a girl saying it. It has some influence on swing voters."

Of course, if Obama's the nominee, he's unlikely to win a national security debate against McCain, with or without Hillary's broadsides. Obama's best bet is to focus the discussion specifically on Iraq. On the other hand, debating national security credentials during the primaries invariably alters the general-election landscape. You can now count on seeing another "3 a.m." ad sometime this fall—not to mention a "3 a.m." debate question from Tim Russert, and a shadowy, "3 a.m."–obsessed 527 group. ("Insomniac Prank-Callers For Truth"?) "I do believe the winner of the 3 a.m. ad is John McCain," says Kevin Madden, a former aide to Mitt Romney. "It's like an NCAA bracket. She may get the play-in game [against Obama], but she'd lose that in the championship game."

And there will surely be more body blows to come. Ad hominem attacks are an almost necessary feature of an unusually long campaign in which policy differences are minimal. At a certain point, there's just no other way to get traction against your opponent. That's one reason Pelosi has informally spoken with colleagues about stepping in if the tone abruptly deteriorates. But there's a catch-22 involved here: Party elders won't forcefully intervene unless an attack does serious damage. But, by then, the damage will have already been done.

Worse, any missile that hits its target would also destroy the person who launched it. Given the delegate math, Hillary's only path to the nomination, barring a meltdown by Obama, is to destroy his electability. But harsh attacks on Obama will inevitably discourage African Americans from voting in the fall, and Hillary can't beat McCain without strong black turnout in places like Cleveland, Detroit, and Philadelphia. Conversely, any attack on Hillary that alienated moderate Republican women could cripple Obama's chances.

Opinion journalists have a time-honored technique for dealing with news they don't like: Keep making phone calls. In my case, this yielded a depressingly meager haul. The most optimistic scenario I could plausibly construct didn't end the campaign *until the second week in May*. To make it happen, Obama would have to overtake Hillary among superdelegates—a key psychological barrier. He'd have to limit his margin of defeat in Pennsylvania to ten points, then hold serve two weeks later in North Carolina and Indiana, a pair of states he's slightly favored to win. At that point, Hillary would face nearly impossible odds of overtaking him in the delegate race.

Unfortunately for anyone who wants the race to end soon, there are several problems with this scenario. For one thing, even if all this comes to pass, Hillary would still have to bow out voluntarily—an unlikely twist in any event, but highly implausible if the limbo states of Florida and Michigan still offer her hope. Meanwhile, any one of the aforementioned steps could easily fall through. Polls currently show Obama trailing by double digits in Pennsylvania; the good Reverend Wright could make that tough to change. And, though Obama now leads in North Carolina and Indiana, his advantage is either small or, in the latter case, based on a single, flimsy poll. As for superdelegates, as of this writing, the last two out of the closet opted for Hillary.

So, to review: The most optimistic scenario we have relies on a highly tenuous assumption; it's unlikely to happen even if that assumption holds; and, regardless, it allows the Democratic contest to drag on for six more brutal weeks. The dream may never die, but it's seen some better days. ◆

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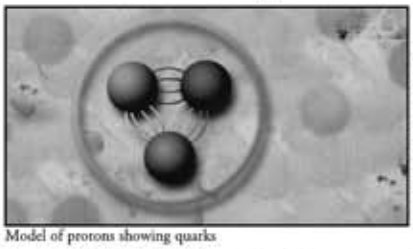

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Model of protons showing quarks

About Your Professor

Dr. Steven Pollock (Ph.D., Stanford University) is Associate Professor of Physics at the University of Colorado at Boulder. He has taught physics courses from introductory physics to advanced nuclear and particle physics. He received the Boulder Faculty Assembly Teaching Excellence Award in 1998. He became a Pew/Carnegie National Teaching Scholar in 2001. He is the author of *Thinkwell's Physics I*, a CD-based textbook.

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Easy Does It

How to make lazy people do the right thing.

RICHARD H. THALER AND CASS R. SUNSTEIN

As everyone knows, many guys are slobs. And, yes, we plead guilty to being guys. It is not that we set out to be sloppy. We have a lot of important stuff on our minds. Whom can we find for a tennis game tomorrow? How is our team going to defend against their three excellent wide receivers? You can see the problem. With these burdens distracting us, how can we be expected to keep a neat desk?

As all women who have ever shared a toilet with a man can attest, men can be especially spacey when it comes to their, er, aim. In the privacy of a home, that may be a mere annoyance. But, in a busy airport restroom used by throngs of travelers each day, the unpleasant effects of bad aim can add up rather quickly. Enter an ingenious economist who worked for Schiphol International Airport in Amsterdam. His idea was to etch an image of a black house fly onto the bowls of the airport's urinals, just to the left of the drain. The result: Spillage declined 80 percent. It turns out that, if you give men a target, they can't help but aim at it.

In the grand sweep of global affairs, dirty bathrooms may be a relatively minor problem. But, by placing fly images on its urinals, the Amsterdam airport was using a technique with broad applications in the world of business and even politics. We call that technique "choice architecture." A choice architect is anyone who influences the context in which people choose—say, by deciding what order to put menu items in, or what path to encourage shoppers to take through a supermarket, or what information to give investors about their retirement savings options, or what to tell patients deciding how to deal with a medical problem. Because seemingly tiny changes in the environment can influence behavior, choice architects wield immense power. Theirs is a gentle power, since they merely nudge rather than coerce. But their nudges can have major effects.

To see why choice architects wield so much power, consider several aspects of human nature. For one thing, there are limits on the number of items to which we can pay attention at one time. We are surrounded by stimuli, and, to survive, we have to direct our attention to what seems most important (such as the road in front of us while we are driving). As a result, we may miss things that are also significant but not currently in focus. When men use an airport urinal, chances are they have things on their mind other than making sure their aim is precise. Placing a fly image in a urinal upends this state of affairs: It causes men to focus on something they would normally ignore—nudging them toward behavior that produces a socially desirable outcome.

Choice architecture derives additional power from two other human fallibilities: inertia and limited self-control. When in doubt, humans tend to do nothing, even when the costs of making a change are trivial and the benefits are significant. We can even be too lazy to pick up the remote and change the channel, which is why networks spend so much time thinking about which show should follow another. We also often have trouble managing ourselves. To take an obvious example, an alarming percentage of Americans are overweight. Most of them would like to be thinner but can't get themselves to diet or exercise. Ever since Adam took a bite of that apple, human beings have tended to show a weakness of will.

In light of these human traits, one important tool at the choice architect's disposal is the designation of a default option. The default option determines what happens if the decision-maker takes no action. Because of limited attention, inertia, and lack of will, the selection of the default can have pronounced effects. Defaults are ubiquitous and powerful. They are also unavoidable, because, for any system of choice architecture, there must be a rule that determines what happens if you do nothing. Of course, the usual answer is that, if you do nothing, nothing changes; whatever is happening continues to happen. But not always. Some dangerous machines, such as chain saws and lawn mowers, are designed with "dead man's switches," so that, once you are no longer gripping the machine, it stops. When you leave your computer alone to answer a phone call, nothing will happen—for a time. But, if you talk long enough, the screen

STEPHEN HAY

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saver will come on; and, if you neglect the computer for longer still, it may lock itself. Of course, you can choose how long it takes before your screen saver appears, but that, in and of itself, takes some action. Your computer probably came with a default time lag for the screen saver. Chances are, that is the one you still have.

Many businesses have discovered the power of default options. When people subscribe to a magazine or website these days, they are typically enrolled in an automatic renewal program. When their subscription runs out, it is automatically renewed unless the subscriber takes some action; and, in many cases, the action requires quite a bit of patience and persistence. One of us (not to mention names, but the lawyer) still has subscriptions to several magazines that he never reads and actually hates, because he has not gotten around to canceling them.

Businesses can manipulate default options toward good ends too, not just selfish ones. Take the issue of employee savings. Economists have long argued that Americans do not save enough for retirement. How might they be nudged to do so? Are tax incentives necessary? New government programs? Actually, there is a much easier way.

Traditionally, when employees first become eligible to join their company's 401(k) plan, they receive a notification from the human resources department along with a bunch of forms. Essentially they are told, if you want to join the plan, fill in these forms, choose a savings rate, decide how you want your money invested, and send the forms back. When it comes to filling in forms, many of us have a tendency to procrastinate, especially if those forms seem to require making important decisions. The tendency is to think, "Oh, I better do some research on which funds to pick before I sign up." The problem is that, once put off, signing up for the plan gets in line with everything else on the "to do" list, right after cleaning the garage.

To solve this problem, some companies have adopted what has come to be called automatic enrollment. Under this regime, when employees become eligible, they get the same package in the mail but are told that, unless they fill out some forms, they will be automatically enrolled with a prespecified savings rate and investment plan. Studies have shown that automatic enrollment greatly increases participation in 401(k) plans. (Workers are more likely to join, and they join sooner.) Since joining the plan is almost always an excellent idea, especially when the firm is making some matching contributions, automatic enrollment successfully nudges workers toward better choices.

Companies have also nudged employees to save more by giving them a chance to commit to gradually increasing their savings rates. One system, devised by one of us (Thaler) and collaborator Shlomo Benartzi, is called "Save More Tomorrow." The idea is that workers are offered the opportunity to sign up for a plan under which their savings rates automatically increase every time they get a pay raise, until they reach some savings cap. In the first firm that adopted this plan, those who joined more than tripled their savings rates. Of course, workers can switch out of this plan at any time. The point is to have a default option going forward that calls for their savings rates to increase along with their wages. Research is now underway on an extension of this idea known as "Give More Tomorrow," by which workers commit themselves to donating part of their future wage increases to charity. It seems possible that Give More Tomorrow, if offered widely, could produce dramatic increases in charitable contributions.

FRANK MAY/DPA/LANDOV

The government is inevitably involved in choice architecture and nudging as well. Some of these nudges involve default options, while others—much like placing fly images in urinals—simply create an incentive where none had previously existed. The 2006 Pension Protection Act, for instance, gently nudges firms to adopt automatic enrollment and a primitive form of Save More Tomorrow. If firms adopt those features and match employee contributions at a specified rate, then they are exempted from the somewhat onerous process of showing they were in compliance with certain federal regulations. No firm is required to adopt these policies—just given a small incentive to do so.

Of course, some government nudging makes people nervous, and rightly so. We would not want public officials to nudge people toward certain religious convictions. We would not want the government (meaning incumbents) manipulating the order in which candidates are displayed on ballots, since the candidate listed first gets a 2 to 5 percent bump in votes. In this domain, the proper thing for government to do is to insist that ballot order be settled randomly—or, better yet, varied across voting places, so the benefit of being listed first is shared by all candidates.

But, sometimes, government can do much better than pick things at random. An infuriating example of inept government choice architecture is the Medicare Part D prescription drug program. Although this program is heavily subsidized and mostly a good deal for seniors, it is much reviled, not only by seniors but by their grown children who get roped into helping them deal with the intricacies of the plan. Those who designed the plan thought that the most important thing to offer seniors was choices; so, in most states, seniors are asked to choose from about 50 different insurance plans. "The more choices you

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have, the more likely it is you'll be able to find a program that suits your specific needs," President Bush told a clubhouse of Florida seniors in 2006. "In other words, one-size-fits-all is not a consumer-friendly program. And I believe in consumers. I believe in trusting people."

It is great to believe in trusting people, but, sometimes, it is also a good idea to offer them a helping hand. We wanted to see what exactly seniors face in making this decision, so we asked a friend of ours to give us a list of the drugs that her mother takes. Then we went to the Medicare Part D website and tried to figure out which insurance plan would work best for her. The first step is to type in a list of all the drugs you take. What a nightmare! The site does not have a spell checker; if you type "Zanax" instead of Xanax, you don't get one of those helpful "Did you mean" Google suggestions. This is a problem because drug names often resemble strings of random letters, so typing errors are to be expected. Other difficulties related to using the site—such as needing to select the correct dosages for all your medications—probably couldn't have been avoided. But the fact is, most senior citizens are bound to find the process arduous. After a couple of hours on the Part D website, we felt that we would soon need some Xanax ourselves.

Given how difficult this process is, you might think that the government would offer a default option for those who did not want to choose for themselves. The Bush administration decided not to do this—that trust thing again. But there was one group of participants for whom the government did have to create a default option: Medicare users who had previously been covered by Medicaid. Non-Medicaid users who didn't sign up for Medicare Part D simply would not be enrolled. But Medicaid users were *required* to switch to Medicare for their prescription drug coverage. Of course, some did not get around to choosing a plan, so the government had to make a choice for them. What do you think that choice was? We will let you pause to consider how you would do it.

Amazingly, the method the government picked was to choose a plan at random! This makes no sense. For many people, and especially for the elderly, it is actually pretty easy to predict what drugs you will take next year—namely, the same drugs you are taking this year. A fact of life is that, the longer you live, the more drugs you take routinely. And, for many of these drugs, once you start, you take them as long as you live. Since the government knows what drugs a patient is taking (from last year's claims) and knows what prices the insurance companies are charging, it is a straightforward matter to make a decent guess about which plan would be best. In fact, the state of Maine, alert to the importance of good choice architecture, has adopted such a plan. It is called "Intelligent Assignment." But the Bush administration has not encouraged other states to adopt the idea. Perhaps, if Maine had called its plan "Intelligent Design," it would have gone further.

Private and public institutions have unlimited opportunities to use good choice architecture to improve people's lives—in domains as varied as protecting the environment, increasing organ donations, and promoting fair divorces. If we want to cut greenhouse gas emissions, for example, we can nudge people simply by giving them vivid information about their current energy uses. Southern California Edison has encouraged consumers to conserve energy by giving them an Ambient Orb, a little ball that glows red when they are using lots of energy but green when their use is modest. Users of the Orb reduced their energy consumption in peak periods by 40 percent. If we want to increase the supply of organs to people whose lives depend on them, we can presume that people want their organs, at the time of death, to be available for use by others. The general American practice is to treat non-donation as the default, but many European countries have adopted the opposite system, called "presumed consent." A study by Eric Johnson and Dan Goldstein showed that changing the default could save thousands of lives annually. And, if we want to protect women, who are especially vulnerable during divorce, we can rely on suitable default rules, which would ensure, as many states do not, that women's income does not fall dramatically in the period after divorce. In all kinds of situations, governments and employers can nudge people toward making better decisions simply by making the better choice easier to adopt.

During the second half of the twentieth century, there was a lot of talk about the possibility of developing some kind of Third Way between capitalism and socialism. Now that socialism is dead, many Americans have come to think that the real decision is between two visions of capitalism—laissez-faire capitalism, which relies on unrestricted free markets, and progressive capitalism, which relies on government mandates and bans to ensure good outcomes. But this is frequently a false dichotomy. In countless domains, good choice architecture can allow governments to preserve freedom while encouraging people to make wise decisions. Sometimes, of course, governments do need to rely on mandates and bans to advance legitimate goals. But often a freedom-preserving nudge is the simplest and most effective tool of all. ◆

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AMBIENT DEVICES

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Full Faith

Despite Jeremiah Wright, Obama gets religion.

E. J. DIONNE JR.

Jeremiah Wright, the preacher who brought Barack Obama to Jesus, also brought him the week from hell. Anyone within reach of even the most primitive forms of media now knows that Wright, the retired pastor of the Trinity United Church of Christ, has preached sermons that veered into the swamp of anti-Americanism and indulged in wild conspiracy theories. So, after being subject to a rumor campaign that pronounced him a stealth Muslim, Obama was now widely deemed to subscribe to a defective brand of Christianity. What other politician has been so plagued by matters involving God? It would not be surprising if Obama felt a sudden kinship for Job.

Obama surely must feel, at the very least, the bitter irony: Few recent presidential candidates have spent more time wrestling with the politics of religion. I have watched him do this from afar for a decade. I first encountered Obama at a Harvard conference on bolstering community, where he befriended Jim Wallis, the progressive evangelical leader. The two have remained in close touch ever since. Well before Obama began running for president, he delivered speeches about the politics of the faithful that were unusually sophisticated by the standards of contemporary politics.

And, on the few occasions I have spoken with Obama about his faith, he has evinced an understanding of the spiritual lives of Americans and familiarity with Reinhold Niebuhr's theology of skepticism and humility. When I interviewed him about his relationship with Wright last week, he told me, "Churches are institutions of men, and, as a result, they are flawed." As I paused to marvel at how this remark could have been plucked from one of Niebuhr's essays, Obama seemed to have the same realization. He quipped, "And that's as Niebuhrian as you can get."

It's typical Obama: using Niebuhr to describe an African American church. During this campaign, Obama has set about preaching a different kind of liberal religion, one that includes the old social justice faith but is also deeply influenced by the experience of the black church. And, if he can move past the Wright controversy, his gospel holds enormous electoral potential. Like the civil rights preachers of old, he has found a religious language that expresses a civic faith sought by secular voters no less than by the religiously inclined—a language that could ease the Democrats' estrangement from theologically conservative Christians. In Obama's signature slogan, "Change We Can Believe In," the most important word may not be "change" but "believe."

Many Democrats discovered God in the 2004 exit polls showing George W. Bush winning big with religiously observant voters and those who said "moral values" were important to them. Even if the Democrats' gestures to the devout often seemed contrived, this openness to faith was, on the whole, a salutary development: Prejudice is still prejudice, and, if it took exit polls to persuade liberals to extend their multicultural openness to people of faith, Hallelujah.

After Bush's reelection, new organizations such as Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good were formed to battle Karl Rove and the GOP for the hearts of the faithful. Smart religious consultants began advising Democrats on how not to leave so many religious votes on the table.

Meanwhile, the Republican Party confronted a crisis as voters concluded that the Bush presidency was a failure. In the 2006 midterm elections, religious voters remained more loyal to the Republicans than the less religious. But, in many states, even the godly started turning on the GOP, and, in some, Democrats nominated candidates who could speak of their own faith naturally and with conviction.

This was happening as the white evangelical world itself was changing. New leaders and new issues were engaging the faithful, particularly younger evangelicals, who were more open to homosexuals, for example, than their elders had been. More importantly, evangelicals of all stripes developed a larger view of their Christian mission, which came to encompass poverty, AIDS in Africa, and the environment.

Most prominent among the leaders of this movement is Rick Warren, pastor of the Saddleback Church in California's Orange County and author of the best-selling *The Purpose Driven Life*. Warren is not an ideologue like Pat Robertson or the late Jerry Falwell. He is as conservative as they come on core social issues but has been openly critical of the old religious right. "Jesus' agenda is far bigger than just one or two issues," he said after the 2006 election. "We have to care about poverty, we have to care about disease, we have to care about illiteracy, we have to care about corruption in government, sex trafficking."

As for the leadership of the old religious right, it failed to deliver in this year's Republican primaries. John McCain won the GOP nomination in the face of their opposition. They didn't like Mike Huckabee, either. But, with one foot in the old religious right and one in a new evangelical populism, Huckabee won a large share of the evangelical vote. Thoroughly orthodox on abortion and gay marriage, he spoke of those losing out in the economy and addressed health care and education. In discussing abortion, he often turned to a broader definition of "life" by calling for respect for human rights around the globe.

The current fluidity in the evangelical world gives Obama his chance of supplying an alternative that would appeal to some of these Warren-style Christians. Obama has gone out of his way to speak respectfully of abortion's foes. His oft-repeated argument that social improvement requires not only "changes in government policy" but also "changes in hearts and a change in minds" appeals to the conversion impulse so integral to the evangelical spirit.

The purpose-driven pastor himself seemed eager to break old molds when he invited Obama in 2006 to join Senator Sam

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Brownback at Saddleback to discuss the global AIDS problem, an issue on which both politicians had worked. Right-wingers said Obama's support for abortion rights obligated the pastor to withdraw the invitation. Warren wouldn't budge. "People ask me, 'Rick, are you right-wing or are you left-wing?'" Warren told ABC News. "I'm for the whole bird."

Obama has been preparing many years for Whole Bird Christianity.

OF COURSE, to bring his Christian faith to Rick Warren's church, Obama—raised with no religion at all—first had to become a Christian. He had to "walk down the aisle of Trinity United Church of Christ one day [in 1987] and be baptized." And that's why it's so hard for Obama to cut himself off from Wright altogether: The pastor is central to Obama's Christian narrative. Indeed, the above quotation comes from his book *The Audacity of Hope*, whose title was inspired by a Wright sermon. Obama has backed away as far as he could without completely disowning the man who he has referred to as "family." Obama told me "the essential failure" of Wright's words "is that they lacked the sense of redemption which is the essence of the Christian faith." Yet Obama, as he put it in a statement on the *Huffington Post*, was also careful to note what he had learned from Wright: "[T]he sermons I heard him preach always related to our obligation to love God and one another, to work on behalf of the poor, and to seek justice at every turn."

In truth, Wright's statements highlighted by the press ran directly counter to the gospel Obama has been preaching: the message of Civil Rights Christianity, a decidedly multiracial and hopeful creed. Obama's emphasis on hope; his talk of struggle, organizing, and movement-building; his repeated references to "the fierce urgency of now"—all openly echo the vocabulary of a civil rights cause steeped in the Scriptures. In particular, he invokes not the side of Martin Luther King Jr. capable of great anger over injustice, but, rather, King's most conciliatory themes.

If Obama's approach is a sincere move (he is plain in his book that he became a Christian in part because he was "drawn to the power of the African-American religious tradition to spur social change"), it is also a shrewd one. In trying to move the religious dialogue forward, Obama is drawing it back to a time when so many pastors were successfully allied with liberalism on the civil rights question that none other than Falwell scolded, "Preachers are not called upon to be politicians, but to be soul-winners."

Civil Rights Christian language has many political advantages; most notably, it is resolutely centered not on the defeat of adversaries, but on their conversion. The conversion theme, and Civil Rights Christianity's notion of building a cross-racial "beloved community," fit almost perfectly with Obama's core message of political and racial reconciliation. "We need to take faith seriously," Obama writes in his book, "not simply to block the religious right but to engage all persons of faith in the larger project of American renewal."

Obama's approach made its national debut in a June 2006 speech to Call to Renewal, a group organized by Jim Wallis. It was the address of a politician who knows that Democrats need a significant share of the religious vote—and also knows that Democrats depend on substantial support from secular voters. According to John Green of the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life and the University of Akron, 20 percent of John Kerry's 2004 voters were secular, atheist, agnostic, or unaffiliated with a church or religious group; only 7 percent of Bush's voters fell into one of those categories. And Kerry's religious vote was, typically for the Democrats, thoroughly polyglot: Fourteen percent of Kerry's voters were white evangelical Protestants, 13 percent were black Protestants, 22 percent were Catholics, and 4 percent were Jews.

The question facing post-2004 Democrats is how to hold all these votes—and add a few more to create a majority. Obama's recipe has two main ingredients: In the Call to Renewal speech, he asserted that "secularists are wrong when they ask believers to leave their religion at the door before entering into the public square." You could almost hear the cheers at Rick Warren's church and others like it. At the same time, he argued that religious Americans needed to remember "the critical role that the separation of church and state has played in preserving not only our democracy, but the robustness of our religious practice." There could be no talk of ours as "a Christian nation" since "we are also a Jewish nation, a Muslim nation, a Buddhist nation, a Hindu nation, and a nation of nonbelievers. … Democracy demands that the religiously motivated translate their concerns into universal, rather than religion-specific, values."

The Grand Obama Compromise comes down to a call for mutual respect, of believers by unbelievers and vice versa. What else would you expect from a candidate who promises, in speech after speech, to "turn the page" on our recent history of disagreeable political (and moral) conflict?

IN FAIRNESS, Hillary Clinton also understands the world of faith far better than most Democrats. Her lifelong Methodism is of the classic sort: a combination of the genuinely spiritual—she speaks of friends who pray for her as "prayer warriors"—and the social and political. "Our faith calls us to do what is hard, to give voice to the voiceless, to lift up the poorest of the poor and the sickest of the sick," Clinton said to a Baptist meeting in January. "We are called, not asked, not urged, not requested, nor ordered, but called to love one another as Jesus has loved us."

The Clinton campaign's top religious adviser, Burns Strider, is a shrewd and cheerful Southern Baptist who has been trying to get Democrats to take religion seriously since the Great Flood. He performed similar chores for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and played a major role in encouraging Clinton to appear on a CNN broadcast last year in which Clinton, Obama, and John Edwards all spoke about their religious lives. Clinton outshined Obama, who was relentlessly intellectual that night.

Given her personal interests and passions, there is no reason why Clinton could not offer her own religious synthesis. But, for now, it is Obama who has worked out a comprehensive approach to faith. Perhaps he has done so because he came to faith as an adult and feels called upon to explain his choice, to give testimony. Perhaps he wants to rebuke those who say falsely that he is a Muslim. Perhaps the constitutional law professor in him finds the church-state issue intellectually engaging. Or perhaps this very shrewd politician simply understands how important it is to Democratic and liberal prospects that we return to the promised land of King and Niebuhr.

Could Obama make it work? To have a chance, his Jeremiah Wright problem will have to fade. Then much will depend on whether the men and women in the pews of congregations such as Saddleback really do yearn for a different and more moderate public role for faith. If Obama can end the culture wars by building a center-left majority that includes the religious and nonreligious, then conservative resistance to his "larger project of American renewal" would become irrelevant. He would have the whole bird. ◆

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Far Wright

Why Obama's preacher problem isn't going away.

DAYO OLOPADE

Now that America has seen clips of Jeremiah Wright—Barack Obama's former pastor and longtime mentor—yelling "God damn America" and referring to the United States as the "U.S. of KKK A," there are obvious questions on everyone's mind. There is, for instance, the complicated biographical question of why Obama aligned himself with Wright in the first place. But there is also the more basic political question of why the presidential candidate didn't disown Wright sooner. After all, whatever personal affection Obama felt for the man who brought him into the Christian fold, he had to realize that Wright was a ticking time bomb for his campaign—someone whom average voters would regard with justifiable horror once they got wind of his views on politics and race. So why didn't Obama push him away long ago?

Actually, he did—sort of. Recall what happened in early 2007. Initially, Obama had invited Wright to deliver the benediction at the event where he would formally launch his candidacy; but, at the last minute, Obama rescinded the invitation. In doing so, it seems likely that Obama understood his political problem and was trying to send his pastor-mentor a polite but firm message: Stay away from the spotlight and, please, for the love of God, try not to cause any controversy, lest you sink my chances of winning.

Most people would have taken the hint. But not Jeremiah Wright. Less than a month later, he was on Fox News bickering with Sean Hannity about "black liberation theology" and admonishing the famously obnoxious TV host, "Let me suggest that you do some reading before you come and talk to me about my field." Five days later, he was in *The New York Times* complaining about Obama's decision to block him from speaking and volunteering that, "[w]hen his enemies find out that in 1984 I went to Tripoli [to visit Muammar Qaddafi] with Farrakhan, a lot of his Jewish support will dry up quicker than a snowball in hell." And he wasn't done yet. Days after that, Wright uncorked an open letter to the *Times* that accused reporter Jodi Kantor of misrepresenting her interview with him. The screed rambled for more than a thousand words before culminating in this: "There is no repentance on the part of The New York Times. There is no integrity when it comes to The Times. You should do well with that paper, Jodi. You looked me straight in my face and told me a lie!"

Why wouldn't Wright take the hint that Obama seemed to be offering and quietly slink into the background, at least until November 2008? Two months ago (long before his most inflammatory sermons had surfaced), I visited Wright's church on a Sunday morning. And what I witnessed that day makes the answer quite clear.

To put it mildly, Jeremiah Wright is a man who is comfortable in the spotlight. Over the past 36 years, he has built Trinity Church, on Chicago's South Side, into a wildly successful institution comprising 8,000 members. The church sponsors two senior centers, an addiction-recovery program, two day-care sites, student mentoring, prisoner visitation, yoga in the mornings, and "singles sermons" on Friday evenings. But, come Sunday morning, all the attention is on one man. On the day I visit—the morning after Obama's landslide victory in South Carolina—three cameras in the main sanctuary are trained on Wright, dressed in one of his trademark dashikis, as he flaps and struts through the Gospel of John, wherein Jesus thwarts his enemies not with force, but with words. The syncopated speaking style politicos have come to expect from Obama has the audience of thousands transfixed. Wright's gravelly tenor hums through the Trinity loudspeakers, and the worshippers are on their feet, murmuring amens. Even choir members can be seen scribbling in their bulletins during the sermon, on the blank, lined pages reserved for such note-taking. (The fine print below? "Sermons copyrighted by Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr.") A scant 30 minutes after the sermon's conclusion, I was able to purchase a copy of Wright's message on DVD in the church bookstore.

Dwight Hopkins, a church member and professor at the University of Chicago Divinity School, told the Baltimore *Sun* that some refer to the blocks surrounding Trinity as "Wrightville." Hopkins added that Wright "doesn't like" the nickname, but, that Sunday, I was struck by how much of the sermon was about—well, him. During the address, he let fly with a verbal fusillade aimed directly at his detractors: "I don't care what nobody in the 4-H club says. Y'all know what the 4-H club is?" The church roared, and he explained: "That's Hannity, Hillary, Hobbes, and Haters." Later, while discussing his opposition to South African apartheid, Wright seemed to take another shot at his enemies: "I was talked about then, and I'm still talked about now," he thundered. "But I'm not going to stop being me because of what somebody *says* about me. [Jesus] set me free to be me and he set me free to forgive stupidity." And here he gets in one more jab: "So I forgive you, 4-H club; I forgive you, confused journalists; I forgive you, nervous negroes—I forgive you."

Having lived for so long at the center of a world he built, Wright may simply not be used to restraining himself. (Indeed, during the past year, even as he had to know that Obama's high profile could bring the press to his pews, he continued to evangelize against the government.) But it isn't just that Wright is self-centered, although that seems to be the case; it is also that his worldview doesn't recognize firm boundaries between religion and politics, or really between religion and anything. When Wright finally carried out his long-planned retirement at the end of February (no doubt much to Obama's relief), his church held a two-week-long celebration honoring him as a "Theologian/Teacher," "Ethnomusicologist," and "African World Visionary." Don't laugh; for Wright, such distinctions are necessarily fluid. The sermon I attended freely mixed faith and politics—at one point, Wright intoned, "I got to tell somebody what the Lord has done for my people. I'm gonna use my mouth! Listen to me and listen carefully: Neither Hillary, Hannity, nor Hobbes ever had a grandparent in slavery or on a slave ship beneath the decks, never had a grandparent in a slave dungeon on the coast of West Africa as a prisoner. That's my people's story, and if you think I'm gonna stop telling it, you got *another damn thing coming!*" No wonder he can't resist sparring with Sean Hannity and *The New York Times*.

Over the past week, as the controversy surrounding his anti-American rhetoric has grown, Wright has remained uncharacteristically silent. Does this mean that the pastor has finally taken Obama's hints and resolved to shun the spotlight? Somehow, I doubt it. Like other people who believe the world revolves around them, Jeremiah Wright never seems to stay quiet for long. ◆

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

REMINDERS

Galina Vishnevskaya, the renowned singer who is now in her eighties and who has hitherto acted principally in opera, plays the leading role in the Russian film *Alexandra*. Possibly this came about because the previous film by this director was a documentary on Vishnevskaya and her late husband, the cellist and conductor Mstislav Rostropovich. That director is Alexander Sokurov, a man with a heavyweight reputation. His three best-known films here are a free adaptation of Shaw's *Heartbreak House* called *Mournful Indifference*; *Mother and Son*, which was as pensive as a film can be and still be called a motion picture; and its exact opposite in pace, *Russian Ark*, a trip through the Hermitage that coursed from beginning to end without a single cut. His interest in opera singers has an antecedent: he once made a film about Chaliapin. Now there is *Alexandra*.

If Sokurov had not been virtually canonized by some serious people (Susan Sontag among them) as an artist far above the career fray, we might speculate that, while making his recent documentary, he thought it would just be shrewd to move Vishnevskaya into fiction and to invent a story that exploited her, one that would command respect because of her very presence. Result: Sokurov wrote a screenplay that cuddles his star in what has to be called a clever plot.

Alexandra is a grandmother, a plain woman from St. Petersburg, who is invited by her soldier grandson, Denis, to visit him at his base in a war zone. The location is never identified, but clearly it is Chechnya. How such an invitation could have been issued—or how it could have been approved (as we learn) by a superior—is unexplained, except by the international rules of film-plot exigency. Alexandra arrives, with both aplomb and irritation, in a freight car along with soldiers.

ANTHONY RUSSO

The camp is rude, but the men are not. Indeed, one of the most telling strokes in the film is Sokurov's concentration throughout on the faces of the many soldiers who see her during her stay—almost with a kind of wonder, disbelief soberly tempered with belief. Denis, who is a hardened regular army type, is truly happy to see her—there has been a seven-year separation—and they fuss over each other as if they had never been apart. At one point he even braids her long hair as he used to do when he was a boy. (An echo here of *Mother and Son*, in which affection between the two is the being of the picture.)

Some incidents had to be invented by Sokurov to keep the picture going, so Alexandra meets a Chechen woman of about her age in the market of the neighboring town and visits her home in a bomb-damaged building. The interchanges between them, of experience and care, remind us—not over-subtly—that humans are humans, whatever their nativity. Alexandra then deplores the barbarity of war with the tough and soldierly Denis—sometimes by implication, sometimes as explicitly as if the subject had never been raised anywhere by anyone. She keeps asking Denis if he has killed people; he avoids answering. One afternoon, however, when he returns from a raid, she asks him again, and his silence conveys that he has done it that morning. Alexandra then tells him things about killing and war that we know before she speaks.

Strangely, however, the familiarity of the film's purpose does not make it tedious. The juxtaposition of an old woman and an army camp has its effect, as movie gimmicks often do: we become open to the things she has to say. Vishnevskaya's person, her plump and unassuming dignity, have their way with us. (Aided, too, by the knowledge that this same woman once sang Aida at the Met.) The complexity of the young man, who is both professional fighter and grandson, is realized by Vasily Shevtsov. Beyond these assets is the blunt fact that Sokurov actually made this film—dared to make it not only in Russia today but in the world today. The state of mind about war that we carry with us to this film is almost touched with gratitude, nostalgic and pleasantly inutile though the reminder is.

ALEXANDRA
Cinema Guild

THE UNFORESEEN
Cinema Guild

FROWNLAND
Frownland, Inc.

A documentary called *The Unforeseen*, set in Austin, Texas, also deals with a familiar idealistic subject, yet it so heartily disregards our familiarity with it that (once again) a certain freshness results. The subject is the ruthless greed of real estate developers who disregard—or minimize—obligations to community benefits and to beauty.

In the late 1970s a developer named Gary Bradley, with partners, launched a project called Circle C Ranch involving two thousand homes on the outskirts of Austin. Bradley ignored the fact that his development would pollute a spring-fed swimming pool called Barton Springs, beloved by the people around it. The film

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traces through the next two decades the protest meetings and other actions that tried to halt the matter, including the state legislature's benign acceptance of Bradley's enterprise. (In some shots Governor George W. Bush smirks remotely.)

How it all turned out let us leave to the film. Notable is the presence of Robert Redford, often concerned with environmental causes, who is interviewed at length on the Barton Springs defense. Redford co-produced this picture with Terrence Malick, a director who, too, has been involved with this subject.

Two other elements lift *The Unforeseen* above most of the many documentaries that address social ills. First, the director, Laura Dunn, somehow persuaded the film's villain, Gary Bradley, to sit down and talk. And talk. Since he is an attractive man, articulate and, in a sense, understandable, he out-stars Redford as he virtually confesses on camera. The conclusion of his interview is a memorable surprise.

Basically, however, in addition to everything in the picture that calls out for the preservation of beauty, is the picture itself. The making of this film about beauty is beautiful. Lee Daniel's camera makes us understand why the Barton Springs community wanted to protect the place: the green landscape apostrophizes the idea of green, and the pool makes spring water very clean. Dunn has shot and edited this film (her first) so that it holds us with its visual quality even if we might have thought we could not be interested. Her title is a phrase from a Wendell Berry poem that is read on the sound-track, atmospherically relevant to the action, and Dunn apparently wanted her picture to be as much like poesy as possible with this prose subject.

Like the anti-war theme in Sokurov's film, Dunn's theme cannot in a sense be raised because it is always there—it never leaves our minds. Both themes gnaw at us because we know that both ask the impossible. War will not stop; neither will spoilage of nature by developers and builders. As for the second issue, which is the only one that it is possible to discuss, Redford admits that change is inevitable but asks that the result not be wreckage. He is keen on the defense of Nature (he implies a capital letter), which can mean only landscape that is untouched. What he does not explain is how it would be possible to accommodate a billowing population with all its technologies and yet leave forests and spring-fed pools in place.

Still, Laura Dunn does a service by reminding us, exquisitely, that human beings have a kind of family obligation to fight, however quixotically, for the things they loved as children, including landscapes.

THE FIRST MINUTE of *Frownland* is so clumsily made and acted that it is like opening a door on a mess. The surprise is that the film never attains any better quality, yet it goes on to amuse, even—we might say—to exist. The writer-director, Ronald Bronstein, said that he wanted to celebrate "a very particular kind of underground sensibility." ("Underground" usually signifies the species of independent film, born midway through the last century, that spurns convention in technique and in viewer expectation. The god of the underground film was—probably still is—Andy Warhol.) We can begin to settle into Bronstein's picture when we see it almost as a signet of that sensibility.

Keith Sontag, a young New Yorker today, lives on a bed in the small kitchen of an apartment that he shares with a fellow who despises him. Keith is, as the other man says, disjointed and sputtering. From the beginning to the end of this film, he is in some sort of frenzy, and we never quite know why. (Thus the title?) The opening sequence deals with his girlfriend, who is having a tearful fit that is never explained. Keith does some door-to-door selling of a kind of coupon that is never explained. The mate later takes a job exam, and we never learn what the job was or whether he got it. Along with this disregard for story structure, the camera work is vintage 1930 and the sound sometimes simply shuts off. Dore Mann, who plays Keith, can approximate frenzy, which he has to do quite a lot, but that is the sum of his talent.

All these elements and more are reminders of much of underground film—especially its egotism, its belief that "If I'm interested in this, you must be too." But at the last, due to Bronstein's giddy commitment, *Frownland* metamorphoses just enough from proudly amateurish film-making into an enjoyable comment on itself. ◆

Ezekiel J. Emanuel
WILL YOUR CELL PHONE KILL YOU?

THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE WAR ON CANCER
By Devra Davis
(Basic Books, 505 pp., $27.95)

I.

IN 1775, Percivall Pott, a surgeon at St. Bartholemew's Hospital in London who gave his name to several diseases and conditions, published *Chirurgical Observations*. Although he had treated such distinguished personages as Samuel Johnson and Thomas Gainsborough, his treatise focused on the lowliest of the low. In so doing, he became the first to hypothesize what is now a widespread notion: that cancer can be caused by environmental exposure. Pott observed that

> There is a disease as peculiar to a certain set of people, which has not, at least to my knowledge, been publickly noticed; I mean chimney-sweeper's cancer.
>
> It is a disease which always makes its first attack on, and its first appearance in, the inferior part of the scrotum; where it produces a superficial, painful, ragged, ill-looking sore, with hard and rising edges: the trade call it the soot-wart. I never saw it under the age of puberty, which is, I suppose, one reason, why it is generally taken, both by patient and surgeon, for venereal. . . .
>
> The fate of these [chimney sweeps] seems singularly hard: in their early infancy, they are most frequently treated with great brutality, and almost starved with cold and hunger; they are thrust up narrow, and sometimes hot chimnies, where they are bruised, burned, and almost suffocated; and when they get to puberty, become peculiarly liable to a most noisome, painful, and fatal disease. . . . The disease, in these people, seems to derive its origin from a lodgement of soot in the rugae of the scrotum, and at first not to be a disease of the habit.

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The narrow, snaking chimneys in London could be cleaned only by hand by small naked children, who were mostly orphans aged four to seven. After a latency period of ten to twenty-five years, these poor sweeps developed scrotal cancer. Scrotal cancer was unique to the chimney sweeps of London; it rarely occurred in the sweeps in Germany or the American colonies. Some attributed it to the English climate. Pott's brilliance was to note that the soot was lodged in the scrotum and that sweeps in other countries wore protective clothing that prevented this. It also turned out that because the sweeps rarely bathed, usually only once a year, the soot stayed in place for months on end.

More than 150 years later, it was discovered that the coal used in England had a higher content of the cancer-causing agent identified in 1933 as 3,4-benzopyrene. Long after Pott's observation, many other agents, from synthetic dyes to vinyl chloride, from diesel fuel to X-rays and tobacco, were identified as causing cancer. Devra Davis argues that not enough attention has been given to these environmental toxins—and, more sensationally, that much effort has been devoted by corporations and establishment scientists to covering up the harm that they cause.

In the age of the Internet, any book that claims to be a "secret history" should immediately raise suspicions, and *The Secret History of the War on Cancer* certainly does. When Stasi files are discovered, when presidential papers or tapes are unsealed and released, scholars are able to reveal important historical secrets. In the field of cancer, when Stanton Glantz of the University of California at San Francisco received a box of confidential tobacco-company records and then published *The Cigarette Papers*, he exposed long-held and important secrets about the cover-up of the connection between cigarettes and lung cancer. Davis has similar muckraking, scandal-mongering ambitions—but she offers no such discovery, no unsealing or publication of confidential or hidden records. There are no secret documents from a chemical company revealing that its products cause cancer or that it suppressed damning data. There are no toxicology test results long concealed by the government revealing that some common chemicals or products cause cancer.

So there is not much that is secret about this "secret history." Nor is Davis's book even a history, in the sense of conveying a systematic, coherent narrative of events related to the fight against cancer over time. While the overall organizational structure of the book is unclear, it certainly is not a chronological record of events related to battling cancer. Neither is it a critical examination of the origins of President Nixon's "War on Cancer" and its subsequent evolution; nor does it track how thinking about the causes, the treatment, or the prevention of distinct cancers has evolved over time.

In fact, it is unclear what exactly Davis is up to, other than trying to stoke unfocused fear about the oncological consequences of the environment. The book bristles with provocative questions. "Why are so many people in their thirties and forties in many industrialized countries coming down with often fatal cancers of the bone marrow and pancreas—diseases that used to occur only in those in their sixties or older?" "Could their shared disease have something to do with the pesticide-sodden wheat and cornfields of Illinois, and the huge grain silos surrounding their small town?" "It could be that people who work as scientists and physicians exercise more and drink less and thus don't die of heart disease. But why do so many of them die of cancer? Could something about the things people do to become or to work as scientists and doctors affect their risk of cancer?" "Electricians, railway workers, telecommunication line workers—in a striking number of industries men have greater risks of breast cancer. How can we know whether electromagnetic fields are responsible for these differences?… What about the growing number of young children and teenagers who have their own cell phones, despite the fact that Scandinavia and many other countries warn that children should not use cell phones at all?" The implications of all these questions are certainly frightening—but Davis has to admit in almost every case that we do not know the answers.

Probably the most interesting and worthy topic treated by Davis concerns the question of how scientists evaluate different potential carcinogens. She notes that each chemical or other potentially toxic agent is tested alone for whether it causes cancer, even though people are frequently not exposed only to one potential cancer-causing agent at a time, but to many simultaneously. So while low levels of a particular chemical may be safe alone, when people interact with it in combination with other chemicals it is often unclear if there is a synergistic effect. Davis raises this important point very early in the book, but she never explores it in any detail.

Instead she prefers to focus on a series of claims that are true and disturbing, but hardly new and revealing. The American approach to cancer, she maintains, is excessively focused on treating the disease once it has occurred and too little focused on preventing the disease in the first place. Going back to the start of the twentieth century, some cancer researchers, including famous and important ones, have been employed by companies to evaluate the toxicity of compounds, and often they tailored their results to the companies' interests or they never publicized their results. To pursue their own economic interests, companies—oil, asbestos, chemical, and other—concealed information showing that their products caused cancer; or worse, disposed of their industrial pollutants in ways that contaminated the environment and exposed people to extremely high levels of toxic agents. These are all disgusting and dangerous practices, to be sure. But after Love Canal and other scandals, as well as the establishment of the need for more than five hundred Superfund sites, such tales do not amount to the shocking revelation of terrible secrets. Moreover, as Davis herself notes, other books, such as Robert N. Proctor's *Cancer Wars: How Politics Shapes What We Know and Don't Know About Cancer* and Gerald Markowitz and David Rosner's *Deceit and Denial: The Deadly Politics of Industrial Pollution*, cover these issues more effectively.

II.

To begin to evaluate a book on the history of cancer, it is important for us to be clear on what we do know about cancer. First, it is a disease of aging. It increases exponentially as people grow older, with a take-off after about thirty-five years of age. When your friends shake their heads and observe that "more people seem to be getting cancer than they used to," that vague awful feeling is simply the result of selection bias. All of us are getting older, and an older population is more prone to getting cancer. Aging, not the rate of cancer, is providing the false impression.

So what does cause cancer? Cigarette smoke contains about 4,000 chemicals, including sixty known carcinogens, and accounts for about 25 to 30 percent of cancers. The other major causes are diet and lack of exercise. High-fat and high-calorie diets, obesity, and sedentary lifestyles contribute another 30 to 35 percent. The expanding obesity epidemic has disturbing implications regarding a future rise in the number of cancer cases. Genetics is a relatively small factor, having a causal role in only about 5 to 10 percent

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of cancers. Ultraviolet radiation in sunlight causes melanoma. Infections can also cause cancer: the human papilloma virus causes cervical, anal, and other cancers, and hepatitis viruses cause liver cancer. These viruses tend to be much more important as causes for cancer in countries outside the United States.

What, then, about toxic chemicals? The Berkeley biologist Bruce Ames, renowned for developing a rapid screening test (the Ames test) to determine whether chemicals cause mutations in DNA and thus might cause cancer, has argued that "past occupational exposures, a major part being asbestos exposure in smokers, might cause about 2 percent of current [human] cancer; industrial or synthetic chemical pollution causes less than 1 percent, in my view." As best as I can tell, Devra Davis never mentions Ames or these figures. But even if Ames's estimate is excessively low, altogether our chemical environment cannot account for more than 5 to 10 percent of cancers.

The overwhelming fact is that, despite the profusion of chemicals and other potentially toxic exposures in modern life, Americans are living longer—a lot longer. In 1900, the average life expectancy of Americans was forty-nine years. By 1950, it was sixty-eight years, and today it is more than seventy-eight years. Granted, it could be higher. The Japanese live more than four years longer than Americans, and even the French live an average of eighty years—but no one thinks this is because they are exposed to fewer chemicals and other toxins in their environment. Probably the primary factor in their good fortune is diet: they eat more fruits, vegetables, and fish, and drink more wine, and consume fewer calories overall.

Since 1930, when the United States began collecting statistics on cancer, the number of new cancers, and of deaths from cancers, had been increasing. This was mainly due to the spread of smoking. After the Surgeon General's report in 1964, which linked cancer and smoking, rates of smoking in America declined from about 43 percent of the population to about 21 percent of adults today. The result is that since 1992, the number of Americans getting cancer and dying of cancer—adjusted for the aging of the population—has been dropping. The total decline is about 8 percent over the last thirteen years.

The fact that cancer rates are dropping while life expectancy is increasing makes it extremely difficult to contend that the profusion of chemicals, cell phone towers, and other worrisome carcinogens are making Americans much less healthy. Indeed, it is fair to say that Americans are healthier now than they have ever been. This might change, of course—but mainly because of obesity.

This does not mean that certain chemical and environmental exposures cannot cause deadly cancers, not at all. Benzene, formaldehyde, vinyl chlorides, and other toxins might increase the number of people contracting specific types of cancer. Yet these divergent trends mean that excessive concern about cancer-causing chemicals is misplaced. Overall, these numbers emphasize that the impact of these toxins cannot be substantial. If Davis truly wishes to warn Americans about the genuine risks of cancer, she should put her fingers to the keyboard and write *The Secret History of McDonald's*.

Ron Herberman is a renowned cancer researcher, the first director of the University of Pittsburgh's Cancer Institute. In the 1970s, he showed that natural killer cells in the immune system destroy cancer cells and keep cancers from spreading. Like many teenagers growing up in the 1940s and 1950s, especially those with a scientific bent, Herberman and his brother built and flew model airplanes, tinkered with cars, and worked in scientific laboratories. Decades later, both brothers developed chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL), a slow-growing cancer of immune cells.

After telling Herberman's story, Davis asks the right questions: "When two brothers from the same family with no known history of disease develop the same disorder of the blood and immune system, we have to ask, Is this just a coincidence? Is it some statistical fluke? Or did something happen to each of these men earlier in life to put them at risk of cancer?" But she never gives the reader a coherent picture of how scientists might answer these questions—how they might figure out whether genetics, or exposure to glue, benzene, formaldehyde, saccharin, diesel, pesticides, or radiation causes CLL or any other cancer; or whether two brothers getting the same cancer is just the consequence of the law of large numbers.

Davis makes a mistake that is all too common in pop-science literature: she focuses on narrative at the expense of data and analysis. Stories such as Herberman's may be stirring, but finally they are not very helpful in trying to figure out whether radiation, a chemical, or another agent has caused cancer. Anecdotes may spark the idea that some chemical exposure is linked to a particular cancer, but for the scientist that is all they can establish. They certainly cannot prove a causal link. Why? For one thing, there is the phenomenon known as recall bias. When people get cancer, they immediately want to know, "Why me?" So they rummage through their past looking for something to explain the disease. I have had patients suggest they got liver cancer from a punch in the stomach a month before, or colon cancer from a severe case of traveler's diarrhea a few years back. When people suffer, they are generally desperate for a quick explanation for their suffering.

There is the additional problem of selection bias. The way researchers collect samples of people with cancer to study can be easily biased. Recruiting people who have cancer and have some common characteristic—say, living near each other—is not likely to generate a random sample. This method necessarily leaves out most of the people who were exposed to an agent but did not get cancer. Moreover, it would be unethical to determine if a chemical causes cancer by conducting a randomized trial in which half the people are exposed to it, so as to see whether they develop more cancers than those not exposed. Instead, researchers must piece together the puzzle while avoiding both recall bias and selection bias.

Over the years, the International Agency for Research on Cancer has codified seven criteria that, when taken together, can be used to confirm (or to refute) whether a particular exposure to a chemical, radiation, or some other agent actually causes cancer:

1. The link or association between the exposure and cancer is strong.
2. The risk of cancer increases with more exposure to the agent.
3. Multiple studies by different investigators with different groups of people come to the same finding.
4. The exposure to the agent came before the cancer.
5. There is a plausible biological explanation for how the agent would cause the cancer.
6. The link is specific, and the agent causes a specific type of cancer.
7. The link fits together with what we know from other studies.

Some of these criteria are less necessary than others: occasionally, for example, a single agent can cause multiple cancers. X-rays are such a case.

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Now consider a controversial example that has concerned the United States and many other countries for three decades—an environmental example. Does electromagnetic radiation from high-voltage power lines cause cancer, particularly childhood leukemia? Ionizing radiation, such as X-rays or the sun's skin-cancer-causing ultraviolet light, are high frequency and have sufficient energy to break chemical bonds in DNA, thus causing cancer. Microwaves and infrared light can only tumble and vibrate molecules, which is essentially the same thing as heating them up; thus the safety of microwaves can be determined by considering the safety of other ways of heating a compound. On the other hand, power lines do not produce high-energy radiation. They produce very low-energy electromagnetic radiation that cannot break chemical bonds or even heat things up—so-called non-ionizing radiation. And because power line electromagnetic fields are low level, their power decreases rapidly in a matter of a few feet.

So can such low-energy radiation cause cancer? The controversy over power lines and cancer goes back to the 1970s, when two researchers from the University of Colorado were puzzling over a collection of childhood leukemia cases in the Denver area. They identified children, under the age of nineteen, who had died of cancer between 1950 and 1973, and then matched them with children born in the same month and county as the children who died. The researchers then went to the houses of the children—the house of birth, the house of death, or another house—and drew, as the researchers reported, "a small map of the electrical wires and transformers in the vicinity.... Distances were measured from the part of the house nearest the wires to the wires." The researchers found that 44 percent of these children who died of cancer had a stable residence near power lines, while only 20 percent of the control children did—a statistically significant difference. One problem that the researchers noted with their findings was that proximity to the power lines was associated with many different types of cancers: "Such a wide association with different types of cancer is not characteristic of known carcinogens such as ionizing radiation; thus the broad association observed here suggests that the [power line]-cancer relationship may not be a causal one." Remember criterion 6.

Over the years, people began reporting associations between this low-energy radiation from power lines and a whole host of conditions—Alzheimer's disease, Lou Gehrig's disease, breast cancer, depression, miscarriage, even suicide. Then, in June 1989, *The New Yorker* ran a series of three long articles by Paul Brodeur titled "Annals of Radiation: The Hazards of Electromagnetic Fields," which argued that crusading researchers had discovered the important link between power lines and cancer, but that the establishment—from the military to cancer doctors to the electric industry—was trying to deny the breakthrough, to cover it up. The report was, to put it mildly, scientifically inaccurate. It contained what an editor at the *New England Journal of Medicine* characterized as "fanciful" explanations for how the radiation caused the cancer.

In the last three decades, more than one hundred studies conducted in many countries, from England to Sweden to Australia to the United States, and costing hundreds of millions of dollars, have examined the link between power lines and various diseases. Several things have become clear. The association between power lines and all the diseases except childhood leukemia is unproven and probably non-existent. Multiple organizations, including the World Health Organization, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, and the European Union's Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks, all cast doubt on the links, suggesting

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further research. The British Health Protection Agency wrote that "there is no clear evidence of a carcinogenic effect of ELF EMFs [extremely low frequency electromagnetic fields] in adults.... Studies of occupational exposure to ELF EMFs do not provide strong evidence of association with neurodegenerative disease [such as Alzheimer's and Lou Gehrig's diseases].... Studies of suicide and depressive illness have given inconsistent results." Remember criterion 3, and the need for consistent results across multiple studies.

The strongest evidence for the alleged causal relationship is childhood leukemia. But in this case everyone agrees that the data fail several of the seven criteria. Most importantly, no one has been able to come up with any plausible theory, much less experimental evidence, for how this very low-energy radiation could actually affect DNA and cause cancer. Higher power magnetic fields can affect nerves and muscles, disrupting the conduction of electrical impulses. But as a World Health Organization report put it, for these low-energy fields that come from power lines, "there are no accepted biophysical mechanisms that would suggest that low-level exposures are involved in cancer development. Thus, if there were any effects from exposures to these low-level fields, it would have to be through a biological mechanism that is as yet unknown." Physicists laugh at the idea. Robert Park of the American Physical Society, a pretty hard-headed scientist, regularly lampoons this link in his blog, "What's New?" A failure on criterion 5. In addition, all studies with animals have failed to show any link between this low-level radiation and cancer. Finally, criterion 2 suggests that there should be an increasing frequency of cancer with more exposure to the low-energy radiation, but this has not been shown.

So the entire controversy comes down to epidemiological studies. In 1996, a committee at the National Academy of Sciences comprehensively reviewed the data, concluding that these epidemiological studies suggested that there were twice as many cases of leukemia among children who lived near power lines. But like the original study from Denver, these studies have tended to suffer from three serious flaws. Many of the studies estimated radiation exposure by measuring the distance from a power line to a house, but at best this is a proxy measure. What we need are actual measurements of radiation levels in the house. Moreover, in many of the studies there was no blinding—that is, the researchers measuring the distance from the power line to the house or the radiation levels in the house already knew whether the child who lived in the house had cancer or not. This is not the best method for ensuring objective data collection. And finally there was selection bias in choosing which cancer victims were included.

To overcome these flaws, the National Cancer Institute undertook a thorough study. Researchers at the NCI selected all children with acute leukemia under fifteen years of age living in nine states who were in a cancer registry. They sent blinded technicians who did not know which children had cancer to actually measure the radiation levels in each child's house over a twenty-four-hour period. They were rigorous about getting into almost all the houses in which the children lived during the five years before their diagnosis. And the measurement of radiation was made very shortly after the diagnosis of cancer. The results? There is no significant excess risk of childhood leukemia associated with actual exposure of the children to radiation in their homes.

Maybe the NCI study is wrong. Maybe the animal studies are wrong. Maybe physics is wrong, and there is some as yet undiscovered mechanism by which these low-energy radiation fields do damage to DNA. How big a cancer problem would exposure to radiation from power lines be? It is a tragedy, obviously, for a child to develop leukemia, although thanks to medical advances over the last fifty years, the disease is now curable in 70 to 80 percent of cases. But from a public health perspective, how big a problem is low-energy electromagnetic radiation from power lines?

Each year in Britain there are five hundred cases of childhood leukemia. It is estimated that even doubling the risk of leukemia for children who live near power lines would increase the number of cases of childhood leukemia by two to five. An independent body studying the problem—and funded jointly by the British government, the electric industry, and the charity Children with Leukemia—concluded that even if all precautionary measures were taken, even if families and schools were moved away from power lines, and power lines were relocated and redesigned to reduce low-energy radiation emissions, "it would be impossible to evaluate the effectiveness of this intervention, as the small reduction in the number of cases would be undetectable." That is, such a small number of cancer cases would be prevented that it would be drowned out by the fluctuation of cases of childhood leukemia from year to year. I have not seen comparable numbers of cancer reduction in the United States; but extrapolating from the British data, each year there might be a reduction of twenty cases among the 3,900 or so childhood leukemia cases in a population of more than sixty million children under fifteen years of age.

In recent years, similar controversies have emerged concerning cell phone towers and base stations. The data are much the same. As Environment, Health and Safety Online, a reliable and responsible website, puts it, "The strength of these fields can decrease to almost undetectable levels at the site property line. Even the peak levels seen are thousands of times lower than the limits set for human exposure to radiofrequency EMFs (electromagnetic fields).... Currently, there is no significant indication that chronic exposure to the EMFs around cellular sites has any potential to be hazardous to human health."

The concern about cell phone handsets is more plausible. They do emit microwave radiation, and they are used close enough to the body to heat up cells that could cause damage, and possibly cancer. So what do we know about cell phones and cancer? There are many studies of the issue. The best of them come to opposite conclusions, although the preponderance of evidence is against the link with cancer. A Swedish study followed 905 adults with brain cancer, and reported that those with more than 2,000 hours of total talk time had a higher rate of brain cancer on the side that they held their phone. Unfortunately, they interviewed people with cancer and asked them about their cell phone use: recall bias—the "why me?" problem—could easily color their reporting. Two other studies, one from Britain following brain cancer patients and one involving more than 420,000 cell phone users in Denmark, showed that there was no association between cell phone use and brain cancer. As one researcher put it, "As the body of evidence accumulates, people can become more reassured that [cell phone handsets] are safe, but the final word is not there yet."

III.

Does any of this come out in Devra Davis's book? *The Secret History of the War on Cancer* avoids engaging in a systematic analysis of whether low-energy electromagnetic radiation poses a serious public health

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risk. Davis provides a table that summarizes three studies of workplace exposure to electromagnetic fields and notes that some well-respected researchers "believe a growing body of evidence shows that there's a serious problem." She points out that the World Health Organization has classified EMF as a possible human carcinogen. But Davis never mentions or analyzes the NCI study or other studies that show no association, or the lack of a biological mechanism to account for how this low-energy radiation could cause cancer, or the animal data. Nor does she ever note what a small number of additional cancer cases would result even if non-ionizing radiation from power lines did cause cancer.

Most importantly, Davis—like many other people obsessed with cancer—does not put these risks in context. Consider the cell phone handsets. Rates of brain cancer have remained remarkably steady despite the advent of the cell phone in 1984. In fact, incidence rates slightly dropped from 6.9 cases per 100,000 people in 1985 to 6.5 in 2004. Actual incidence counts reflect this trend: in 1997, when only 55 million cell phone subscriptions existed in the United States, the American Cancer Society reported 17,600 new diagnoses and 13,200 deaths due to brain cancer. In 2006, when the number of cell phones in use had quadrupled to more than 200 million, there were 18,820 new cases and 12,280 deaths attributed to brain cancer. And this occurred even as the overall U.S. population increased by more than 33 million between 1997 and 2006. On the other hand, each year there are 2,600 deaths and 330,000 injuries caused when car drivers use—and are distracted by—cell phones. If we really care about people's health, which problem should vex us more: cell phones causing brain cancer or cell phones causing car accidents?

Although she wants "the establishment" to shift its focus from cancer treatment to prevention, Davis cannot even embrace the successes already achieved in the public health fight in the screening and prevention of cancer. In the early part of the twentieth century, cervical cancer was the number-one cause of cancer deaths among American women. It remains the leading cause of cancer deaths in many developing countries, such as Zimbabwe and Uganda. In 1928, Georgios N. Papanikolaou, a Greek physician who was working at New York Hospital and Cornell Medical School, developed the cervical smear that has come to be called the Pap smear. The technique allowed doctors to see cells that were being sloughed off the cervix, and to distinguish normal cells from pre-cancerous and cancerous cells.

The Pap smear was not immediately embraced. The medical profession was slow. The test had not yet been shown reliably to diagnose cancers at earlier stages or actually to reduce mortality from cervical cancer. And the test clashed with social mores. As Davis puts it, having women "lie down with their skirts up, their underwear off and their legs apart" and permit an unrelated male to peer into their genitals was hardly socially sanctioned. Still, in the 1930s, the American Society for Cancer Control (ASCC) mobilized women to fight cancer, especially cancer of the cervix. It launched what Davis calls "an unprecedented campaign for public awareness of a disease seldom discussed in polite company."

Through the 1940s and early 1950s, there remained considerable controversy about, and resistance to, the Pap smear, much of it driven by professional turf issues. Physicians, ever concerned about control and protecting their procedure-driven income stream, opposed having medical technologists do Pap smears. By the 1950s, though, irrefutable data had accumulated to show that the Pap smear really could reduce cancer deaths, and soon thereafter sufficient professional and public pressure developed to overcome the resistance of doctors. In 1957, the American Cancer Society (ACS) launched a national effort to promote Pap smears. The result has been nothing short of dramatic. In 1930, cervical cancer caused nearly forty deaths each year per 100,000 women. By 1970, the rate was down to fifteen, and by 2000 2.3 deaths per 100,000 women—a mere 5 percent of the original.

While doctors and the ACS were pushing screening, researchers were looking to find the cause of cervical cancer. By the mid-1970s, epidemiological studies suggested that cervical cancer was a sexually transmitted disease, and researchers hypothesized that human papilloma virus was a cause, if not *the* cause. In the early 1980s, researchers were able to establish that of the more than 100 different papilloma virus strains, two—HPV-16 and HPV-18—were "high risk" and accounted for approximately 70 percent of all cervical cancer cases. Researchers were then able to work out the precise proteins that these particular viruses used to transform normal cervical cells into cancerous ones. Multiple trials were undertaken to show whether a vaccine against HPV could prevent pre-cancerous cervical lesions and cancer. In June 2006, the FDA licensed a vaccine called Gardasil, produced by Merck & Co., to protect women ages nine to twenty-six against HPV-16 and HPV-18. (This vaccine also protects against HPV-6 and HPV-11, which account for 90 percent of genital warts but do not cause cancer.)

In a span of only eighty years, then, we have witnessed the development and widespread use of a simple screening test, followed by the development of a vaccine that, if widely deployed, can substantially eliminate what was once the leading cause of cancer deaths among women. Like any human achievement, this one had to overcome scientific and technical obstacles, as well as the obstructions of ego, professional status, and greed. Widespread screening could have been introduced as much as fourteen years earlier, had it not been for these human obstacles; but anyone concerned about women's health, and working to switch the emphasis from treating cancer to preventing it, really should celebrate.

What is Davis's view? Only negative. She emphasizes the internal politics and turf battles. She asks why the vaccine is recommended for pre-teenage girls when "very few [pre-teens] were in these trials" that showed its effectiveness. "What about boys? Why are we prepared to vaccinate young girls but not young boys who can spread [the virus]?" And she goes on to assert that "no one is expressing concerns about the health of gay men or about prospects [of using the vaccine] to reduc[e] laryngeal cancer [that is also caused by papilloma viruses]." These are legitimate questions. And contrary to Davis's assertion, and certainly contrary to her tone of lonely dissent, these issues are in fact part of an ongoing and very mainstream policy debate. But in some real sense they are all secondary issues if the subject is the "war on cancer." What is genuinely significant here is that the history of cervical cancer is the very model of what we should want to achieve. Medical science has beaten this disease—not by treating it with expensive and toxic chemotherapy, but by preventing it with a safe and painless vaccine. Davis should be pouring champagne instead of squeezing sour grapes.

The Secret History of the War on Cancer is a hysterical and exasperating book. It has no overall structure and it repeats itself in the sloppiest ways. It meanders into stories and themes that have no obvious pertinence to cancer and the war on cancer. And worst of

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all—this being a protest, after all, against the state of medicine and science—are its New Age tones. A well-trained and reputable cancer epidemiologist might be expected to produce a book based on research and data rather than unsubstantiated claims and anecdotes. But throughout *The Secret History of the War on Cancer* there is a continuing homage to "treatments" that have not even been subject to serious research, much less proved safe or effective. Davis ends the chapter titled "Doctoring Evidence" by recounting the experience of people, such as the husband of Donna Karan, in using "yoga, meditation, massage, acupuncture, herbs, detoxing systems and prayer" to fight cancer. Even worse, she seems to argue against the need to evaluate these "treatments" through research: "For new herbal and nutritional remedies against cancer, or even for new uses of the soothing sounds and relaxing smells of aromatherapy, we can't persuade patients who've been told they will die to agree to sit through a trial they may not see the end of."

The notion that these "treatments," especially the herbal and nutritional ones, might help, and so need not be subjected to a research trial, is dangerous. Many such agents are unregulated and contain unknown ingredients. More importantly, as we learned the hard way with Vitamin E and beta-carotene supplements, what seems healthy may actually promote cancer growth. And then there is the unforgettable climax, Davis's epilogue. Much of it is a moving portrait of her mother's death from stomach cancer, which is one of the least treatable cancers. But then Davis tells a long story of her own toxic reaction to the stings of two dozen hornets, and it contains this:

> All I know is that the day I almost died, I floated into the whitest, holiest, most comforting and shimmering radiance I have ever known. I came face to face with a beatific, white-robed, vaguely maternal, olive-skinned being. I gestured to my body on the table below and told her, "This is just lovely. Really wonderful. But, I'm not ready. I would like to get back."
>
> I woke up....

The fact that Davis includes this hallucination in a purportedly serious book on cancer makes me wonder if she really did wake up. Call me old-fashioned, but when it comes to science, and to history, I like to stick to the facts, and nothing but the facts. The stakes are too high for anything else. ◆

Peter N. Miller

'WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT MURDERED PEOPLES'

WHO WILL WRITE OUR HISTORY? EMANUEL RINGELBLUM, THE WARSAW GHETTO, AND THE OYNEG SHABES ARCHIVE
By Samuel D. Kassow
(Indiana University Press, 523 pp., $34.95)

I.

THIS MAY WELL BE the most important book *about* history that anyone will ever read. It is also a very important book *of* history, telling the story of an extraordinary research project in the Warsaw Ghetto between 1940 and 1943. As a tale about why doing history matters, Samuel D. Kassow's book has few equals in our collective record. Marc Bloch, arrested by Klaus Barbie's henchmen and executed in 1944, has become the martyr-saint of modern history, and his book *The Historian's Craft*, left incomplete and published posthumously, has emerged as our time's classic work on the meaning of doing history. Now, with the publication of *Who Will Write Our History?*, Marc Bloch will have to share his great and dark honor with Emanuel Ringelblum. Like Bloch, Ringelblum is a hero of history and a hero of historiography.

In 1940, Warsaw had a population of around 1.2 million people, its Jewish population swollen to almost one-third of that number by forced immigration. In the autumn of that year, the Jews of Warsaw were walled into a 3.5-square-mile area of buildings—30 percent of the city's population less than 3 percent of its space—where, in the next year and a half, 83,000 proceeded to die from hunger. In the summer of 1942, 300,000 Jews were taken away for murder, mostly at Treblinka. In April and May, 1943, the remaining Jews, perhaps 60,000 were killed, or captured and deported, in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, during which the Germans leveled that part of the city.

To contemplate, to plan, and to carry out an elaborate project of scholarly self-study under such conditions is almost unimaginable. But even had it not been undertaken in one of the deepest circles of hell, the *Oyneg Shabes* project would still be astonishing for the sophistication of its approach to the questions that interested the best historians of the 1920s and 1930s. As their own history was coming to an end, these historians were breaking new historical ground. And if the contents, or even just the contours, of their work had been known, the shape of historical research in the second half of the twentieth century might have been different.

But almost no one knows about the *Oyneg Shabes* Archive. The reasons are many. It was written in Yiddish and Polish. It was buried in tin boxes and milk cans under the ghetto's buildings in 1942 and 1943. And after it was excavated from beneath the rubble, in 1946 and in 1950, the surviving 35,000 pages of documents were locked away in the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. Only recently has a substantial restoration project been undertaken. A complete catalogue still does not exist. There are few translations (and existing ones are of poor quality). Only a handful of scholars have worked on the material, and its popular echoes are dim. Kassow, a historian of imperial Russia with a Yiddishist's sixth sense for the cultural landscape of interwar Poland, is the first to give a picture of the whole project, and of its amazing chief protagonist. For all these reasons, this book—itself an act of historical rescue—is a work of tremendous significance.

AND YET, HAD IT not been for a most malign fate, Emanuel Ringelblum would probably be unknown today. He was born in 1900 in the eastern Galician town of Buczacz, the same town memorialized by his *landsmann* S. Y. Agnon (and whose more recent fate has been studied by Omer Bartov in his book *Erased*). Ringelblum went to Warsaw, taught in school, took a doctorate in history, and became active in socialist Jewish politics, serving as editor of a variety of journals. His pre-war life reflected the tumultuous times. Yiddish, Bundist, Zionist, anti-Zionist, Polish cultural and religious politics: they all roiled away through the pre-war decades.

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But Ringelblum's intellectual path also cut across many important themes of modern historical—and modern Jewish historical—scholarship, such as the rise of folklore studies in Eastern Europe and the opening to economic and social history. In this, one could say that Ringelblum followed the path first sketched out by the great Jewish historian and thinker Simon Dubnow and later elaborated by Isaac (Ignacy) Schiper (1884–1943), a pioneering scholar of medieval Jewish economic history. In those years, an ethnographic and economic horizon jointly opened onto the world not of the "Sabbath Jew" but of the "Everyday Jew." And this Jew spoke Yiddish. The "Task of Yiddish Philology," as it was formulated before World War I, was to hitch the study of Yiddish literature—of great writers such as Mendele Mocher Seforim and I. L. Peretz—to the folklorists' and ethnographers' study of Yiddish life. This call to rediscover and to explore the uncharted world of the Yiddish universe was no different from the fifteenth-century Italian humanist's call to explore the universe of ancient Latin literature. He, too, started with the text and followed its unraveling skein deeper and deeper into the recesses of a lost world—along the way encountering and explaining costume, religion, law, sport, music, food, calendars, sexual practices, work, buildings, technology, and so on. A Yiddish philology, like classical philology, would reconstruct the worlds of books. But unlike classical philology, the worlds of the Yiddish philologist still survived—until 1939.

When the Yiddish Scientific Institute, or YIVO, was founded in 1925, its goal was to recover this world. And it succeeded. Questionnaires about the way everyday life was lived were sent out, and back flowed the answers. Ringelblum absorbed both the message and the method of YIVO—its emphasis on philology, economics, folklore, history—and celebrated it in a series of articles written while he was still a student. As much as anything, Ringelblum's Marxism—he was a member of the Left Poalei Zion (LPZ), a Zionist group for which the road to Tel Aviv passed through Moscow but nevertheless remained committed to cultural education in the Polish diaspora—amounted to a scholar's commitment to blast away the old hierarchies of theme, evidence, and audience. Marxism legitimated the demolition job, but it did not really provide, or guide, the content. This was an eclectic Marxism not much different in function from the Marxism of Walter Benjamin—a method of historical imagination, and a stumbling block for the orthodox.

Ringelblum's doctoral dissertation on the medieval and early modern Jews of Warsaw was published in 1932. True to the message of Yiddish philology and YIVO, he brought a whole new cast of characters into Jewish history: tavern keepers and pickpockets, beggars and vagabonds, wandering jesters and thieves. But Ringelblum was also committed to studying the monuments of Jewish Warsaw and the physical space in which Jewish history was lived. If this all sounds like Ringelblum was as much a Warsaw representative of the Paris-based *Annales d'histoire économique* as of the Vilna-based YIVO, it might be because his *promotor*, Marceli Handelsman, actually was in sympathy with the early *Annales* School. Handelsman was a social historian, but he wrote extensively about historical methodology and source criticism—and these "auxiliary sciences," derived in the eighteenth century from earlier antiquarian practice, provided an alternate path to the study of social and economic reality.

Emanuel Ringelblum, c. 1940

USHMM, COURTESY OF YAD VASHEM

Much of Ringelblum's historical writing was "descriptive," paraphrasing and summarizing court documents. Some professional scholars, reflecting the centuries'-old division between antiquaries who collected, described, and compared, and historians who spun smooth-surfaced narratives, mocked Ringelblum for this "descriptiveness." But the winds of change were behind Ringelblum. The future, though his critics might not have realized it, would belong to the describers. Folklorists, anthropologists, sociologists, geographers, and social historians would rule the social sciences in the second half of the twentieth century, even if this future would not belong to him.

II.

Emanuel Ringelblum took his vision of an ethnographically informed social history with him into the Warsaw Ghetto. What emerged from the ground, nearly a decade later, was this amazing record of an extraordinary research project, the *Oyneg Shabes* Archive. The first cache of documents, buried probably on August 3, 1942, contained 25,540 pages of material. The second, buried in February 1943, held 9,829 pages, all from the period August 1942–February 1943. For four years the first cache lay in the ground, where water penetrated the ten tin boxes and a fungal bloom ruined many documents and photographs. The second archive emerged from its seven years' inhumation in relatively better condition, because its aluminum milk cans were more watertight.

What was the *Oyneg Shabes* project? In the first instance, it was people. About fifty or sixty of them, to be precise, nearly all intellectuals. Before the war they had been professors, journalists, writers, poets. In the ghetto, they participated in Ringelblum's project from their particular vantage points, documenting house committees, soup kitchens, or postal routes, so as to interview, study, analyze, and record daily life in that purgatory. Their essays were then copied over by a second group of collaborators. There was a third group, the executive committee, that provided funding—typically, well-to-do Jews whose surviving wealth was spent on everything from pen and ink to the medicines needed to keep valuable contributors alive. Ringelblum also took advantage of his position in the Jewish

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self-help umbrella organization in the Warsaw Ghetto. The soup kitchens run by the *Aleynhilf* fed his writers.

It was called *Oyneg Shabes*, or Sabbath Joy, because its board met on Saturday afternoons. But its content was secret. Besides Ringelblum and his closest secretaries, no one had contact with the three people whose task was to store and, on the appropriate signal, to bury the archive. They lived entirely cut off from the collective project, so that if the ring were broken they would not be compromised. Revolutionary organizations had used a cellular structure of this sort to protect the lives of killers; here it was adopted to protect documents from the killers. Not lives, but documents: everyone in *Oyneg Shabes*, at least by the autumn of 1942, knew what their fate would be. (Only three survived the war, including one who knew the location of the hiding place.)

Most importantly, perhaps, the *Oyneg Shabes* group was a collective—the first real "History Workshop." (It was the *Oyneg Shabes* project that, in a head-spinning irony, created the history of everyday life, *Alltagsgeschichte*, which German left-wing historians later re-invented in order to grasp better the enormity of the German slaughter of the Jews.) In Ringelblum's archive, a scholarly instrument and a social ideal merged. The ambitions of all those pre-war ethnographic projects now seemed to offer the only way in which the story of the Warsaw Ghetto could be adequately told. Collecting, comparing, and describing also offered the Jews an ideal of survival—individual and collective—to which they could cling amid the shipwreck of Polish Jewry.

But as much as it was a collective, posterity has committed no error in calling it the "Ringelblum Archive." For he led the executive committee, and shaped the research projects, and enlisted the writers, and managed the stages of the process, and oversaw the whole. Soon after the ghetto was walled off, in November 1940, Ringelblum launched the enterprise, recognizing that this was a historically unique moment. At this early stage, one could still have imagined that there would be a "post-war" Jewish world in Poland that would have to take stock of this unprecedented reality. And so the methodological goals of the *Oyneg Shabes* group were to collect evidence and to study Jewish society, gathering individual testimony, documenting German crimes, and, later, alerting the outside world to the mass murder being perpetrated. It was, in short, about truth. As Ringelblum later wrote: "To ensure objectivity, to achieve as accurate and comprehensive a picture as possible of the War events in Jewish life, we tried to have the same incident described by as many people as possible. By comparing various accounts, the historian is able to arrive at the historical truth, the actual course of the event."

The archive commissioned essays and collected ephemera, knowing that one day it would be precious documentation of a world as strange and distant as deepest antiquity. We find samples from the underground press, documents, drawings, candy wrappers, tram tickets, ration cards, theater posters, invitations to concerts and lectures. The archive preserves copies of complex doorbell codes for apartments housing dozens of tenants, and also restaurant menus advertising roast goose and fine wines. There were hundreds of postcards from Jews in the provinces about to be deported into the unknown, and there was the ghetto poetry of Władysław Szlengel and Yitzhak Katznelson. There is the entire script of a popular ghetto comedy called "Love Looks for an Apartment." There are long essays on ghetto theaters and cafés alongside school primers and reports from orphanages. The first cache of tin boxes also contained photographs, seventy-six of which survived, showing street scenes, starving children, Jewish police, the building of the walls, smugglers throwing sacks of flour over the walls, people listening to loudspeakers in the street, and so on. Last inserted were German posters announcing the deportation—these materials would not have existed prior to July 22, and the first cache was buried thirteen days later.

Oyneg Shabes milk can, 1943

USHMM, COURTESY OF ŻYDOWSKI INSTYTUT HISTORYCZNY–INSTYTUT NAUKOWO-BADAWCZY

In the milk cans of the second cache were placed penciled notes in shaky handwriting smuggled out of the *Umschlagplatz*, begging for last-minute rescue. But there was also a much higher percentage of "official" documents, both German and Jewish. The surviving Jews now collected as much as possible about Treblinka. They also documented the psychological consequences to those who survived the Great Deportation, including the world of the shops and barracks that replaced ghetto life. We find poetry of the period, as well as information on the first armed confrontation between the Jewish Fighting Organization (ZOB) and the Germans in January 1943. The remaining contributors to the *Oyneg Shabes* project put their "ego documents" into this second cache, including university diplomas and personal writings. It was to these milk cans that Ringelblum entrusted the entire manuscript of the history of Warsaw Jewry that he wrote during the war—still unpublished, uncited, and, so it seems, unread; and among the last documents in the second cache was Ringelblum's essay on the *Oyneg Shabes* Archive itself, as well as pamphlets put out by the ZOB calling for armed resistance. The third cache, buried in April 1943 on the eve of the Uprising, probably contained more material of this sort.

In early 1942, Ringelblum, and Menakhem Linder, an economist, and Eliezer Lipe Bloch, who in the pre-war period was director of the Jewish National Fund in Poland, re-conceptualized the work of the archive under the rubric of "Two and a Half Years"—a history of the ghetto, and a history unlike any history written in Europe at the time. As Ringelblum formulated it, the project "will describe the inner life of Jewish society in the Warsaw Ghetto.... Two and a half years of war have produced as many changes for European Jewry as previous

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generations might have experienced in decades." He and his colleagues compiled comprehensive questionnaires, conducted interviews, and organized essay contests, all designed to yield a picture of the economic, cultural, and communal life within the walls. Ringelblum was in charge of the cultural history, Linder of the economic history, and Bloch of the communal history (which was devoted to the documentation of Jewish mutual aid). The whole was slated for 1,600 printed pages. The weekly meetings of the *Oyneg Shabes* board worked out the theses and the guidelines to be pursued.

Economic questions were approached as windows onto cultural history. The commissioned essays include "New Trades in Wartime," "On Jewish Barbers," and "Processes of the Adaptation of the Jewish Artisan to Wartime Conditions," as well as an anonymous study of the wealthy Jewish brushmaking entrepreneurs Weitz and Krygier. Eliyahu Gutkowski wrote on price changes in foodstuffs and various basic commodities. There were studies of ghetto exports, of the *Transferstelle* (where goods officially entered and exited the ghetto), and of the trade in used articles, and of the gigantic flea markets that emerged to satisfy unmet material needs. There were also essays on "Jewish Economic Life in Poland During the War and Occupation," on the black market in foreign currency, and on smuggling.

The discussion of smuggling was paradigmatic. It began with the question of how Jews in the ghetto did not starve to death. German rations for the more or less 400,000 Jews in the ghetto amounted to approximately 180 calories per day per person. For the Jews to survive, the ghetto had to buy food illegally. From legal means, the ghetto took in 1.8 million zlotys' worth of food each month, but in order to buy enough food for the community it had to spend another 70 to 80 million zlotys per month. Where did all this money come from? The answer, as was obvious, was smuggling. Less obvious, however, but entirely in keeping with Ringelblum's wider historical vision, was that it took two parties to smuggle: Jews inside the walls, Poles outside the walls. And so he concluded that the survival of the ghetto constituted a high point of hundreds of years of Polish-Jewish relations. After the war, he wrote a monument to "the unknown smuggler" would not be out of place in Warsaw.

Another projected area of study was the *shtetl*—Jewish town and village life. This line of inquiry was launched when it became clear that Jewish towns and villages were being eradicated. Unlike the *Yizker bikhr*, the memorial books that were published after the war, which recalled villages through the memories of their survivors, the accounts in Ringelblum's archive were collected in real time from deportees who had found their way to Warsaw, with a recognition that only writing now stood between centuries of Jewish life and oblivion. These accounts were full of information on deportation, torture, and murder.

Again, a normal response to the encircling reality would surely have been utter despair. But Ringelblum the historian thought in terms of change. Thus, as a part of "Two and a Half Years," the *Oyneg Shabes* group launched a new survey on the future of the Jews. In the Warsaw Ghetto! The researchers approached fifty Jews from different backgrounds and asked them what they thought the future would bring. Names of thirty-one of them have survived in the archive, and nine of the interviews were preserved intact in the first cache. These responses represented a cross-section of Warsaw Jewish intelligentsia.

The plan to document the lives of children in the ghetto was among the most painful. It was also left radically incomplete, since the Great Deportation of July–September 1942 removed 99 percent of the children. (Of 51,458 children in the ghetto, only 498 remained.) Indeed, the entire project almost collapsed under the weight of the Great Deportation. Though Ringelblum used every resource at his disposal to shelter his collaborators and to bribe the Jewish policemen who carried out much of the work, his ranks were decimated. And those who were left had to face life without their wives or children.

Even in the midst of this devastation, however, Ringelblum kept thinking about how to study the changing present so as to benefit the future. Statistics were key. One of the *Oyneg Shabes* contributors, Gustawa Jarecka, explained that "statistics and official proclamations are the fundamental documents of the [Great Deportation]. Written accounts can only provide some additional details about events and specific incidents. But basically nothing is more expressive than statistics!" It was one of the truly remarkable accomplishments of the archive that the commitment to the authority of numbers never degenerated into the tyranny of numbers. In the *Oyneg Shabes* Archive, the individual remains intact and central, unobscured and unvarnished. This is a record of human beings, with human

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voices, in an inhuman existence. There are many essays in the archive written by parents memorializing their dead children. What on this earth could be more personal than that?

This perhaps explains the singular importance of poetry in the archive: it is the most individuated form of memory, and thus the essential complement to the project's social-scientific perspective. Ringelblum seems already to have understood what Arnaldo Momigliano later posited as a rule for the study of ancient history: read poetry. It was the only way to understand how people in the past actually felt. Władysław Szlengel, in a poem called "*Pomnik*," or "The Monument," invokes Pindar and other classical poets of remembrance when he sings of the Jewish mother and wife taken "just as she was, / standing near the kitchen stove," leaving a hole in space where once there had been life.

> For heroes—poems and rhapsodies!!!
> For heroes—the homage of posterity,
> Their names etched in the plinths,
> for them a monument of marble.
> But who will tell you, the people of
> the future,
> Not about bronze or mythic tales
> But that they took her—killed her,
> That she is no more.

The *Oyneg Shabes* project was completed at the beginning of April 1943, when the final trove of materials was buried. When the Uprising broke out on April 19, Ringelblum was captured and sent to the Trawniki labor camp. He was there until August 1943, when he was smuggled out by the Jewish-Polish underground, brought back to Warsaw, and sent into hiding on the Aryan side. There, in a bunker seven meters long by five meters wide that he shared with thirty-nine other Jews, including his wife and son, Ringelblum completed four major works: a detailed study of the Trawniki camp, perhaps the first study ever made of the concentrationary universe; a report on Jewish armed resistance; a treatment of the Jewish intelligentsia; and a survey of Polish-Jewish relations during World War II. The first two were lost, the latter two survived. Ringelblum himself did not. The bunker was eventually betrayed, and its occupants were taken away. In prison his fellow inmates again sought to save him, but he refused to abandon his boy, and soon afterward he was executed.

In the ghetto, the archive was not the only thing buried in the earth. But only the archive rose up from it. Biondo Flavio's fifteenth-century words describing the fragmentary survival of the ancient world, later repeated by Francis Bacon, come to mind when contemplating what has come down to us from Ringelblum's world: "like planks from a shipwreck."

III.

Aura confers authority. The conditions under which books are produced add to their force. Thanks to Samuel Kassow, the *Oyneg Shabes* Archive is now restored to history. But this is also a story about historiography. Marc Bloch's *The Historian's Craft* is a wonderful book, but knowing that its author was martyred in mid-sentence changes the way we read it. The same could be said of Emanuel Ringelblum and his archive. And reading it in this light we may discern precepts for doing history, for understanding the "historian's craft," as compelling as its narrative of life in the Warsaw Ghetto. Here are what we might call Ringelblum's Rules:

1. *Seriousness of purpose is crucial.*

"'When a Jewish *sofer* [scribe] sets out to copy the Torah, he must, according to religious law, take a ritual bath in order to purify himself of all uncleanliness and impurity. This scribe takes up his pen with a trembling heart, because the smallest mistake in transcription means the destruction of the whole work. It is with this feeling of fearfulness that I have begun this work with the above title. I am writing it in a hideout on the Aryan side. I am indebted to the Poles for having saved my life twice during this war.... It is my wish to write objectively, *sine ira et studio*, of the problem of Polish-Jewish relations during the present war." (Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War*)

2. *Words are powerful.*

"We hate words because they too often have served as a cover for emptiness or meanness. We despise them for they pale in comparison with the emotion tormenting us. And yet in the past the word meant human dignity and was man's best possession—an instrument of communication between people." (Gustawa Jarecka, "The Last Stage of Resettlement Is Death," late 1942)

3. *Facts matter.*

"Facts!" (Anonymous, scrawled in the margin of a questionnaire being prepared on the subject of German-Jewish relations in the ghetto)

"Two and a Half Years ... which goals? A photograph of life. Not literature but science." (Ringelblum, note deposited in the Archive, late 1942)

"I consider it a sacred duty for everyone, whether proficient or not, to write down everything he has seen or heard from others about what the Germans have done.... It must all be recorded without a single fact left out." (Menakhem Mendel Kon, diary, Autumn 1942)

"The mass murder, the murder of millions of Jews by the Germans, is a fact that speaks for itself. It is very dangerous to add to this subject interpretations or analyses. Anything that is said can quickly turn into hopeless hysteria or endless sobs. So one must approach this subject with the greatest caution, in a restrained and factual manner ... this had been my intention: not to express but to transmit, to note only facts but not to interpret." (Rachel Auerbach, writing of the ghetto on the Aryan side, 1944)

4. *Nothing is unimportant.*

"Collect as much as possible. They can sort it out after the war." (Ringelblum to Hersh Wasser, recorded by Wasser)

"Comprehensiveness was the main principle of our work." (Ringelblum, "O.S." [*Oyneg Shabes*], late December 1942)

"Given the daunting complexity of social processes, where everything is interdependent, it would make no sense to see ourselves in isolation.... We have to regard ourselves as participants in a universal attempt to construct a solid structure of objective documentation.... Let us hope that the bricks and cement of our experience and our understanding will be able to provide a foundation." (Ringelblum to Hersh Wasser, recorded by Wasser)

5. *Understanding the past is an intergenerational project.*

"The record must be hurled like a stone under history's wheel in order to stop it.... One can lose all hopes except the one—that the suffering and destruction of this war will make sense when they are looked at from a distant, historical perspective." (Jarecka, "The Last Stage of Resettlement Is Death," late 1942)

"Everything depends on who transmits our testament to future generations, on who writes the history of this period. History is usually written by the victor. What we know about murdered peoples is only what their murderers vaingloriously cared to say about them. Should our murderers be victorious, should *they* write the history of this war, our destruction will be presented as one of the most beautiful pages of world history.... Or they may wipe

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out our memory altogether, as if we had never existed, as if there had never been a Polish Jewry, a ghetto in Warsaw, a Majdanek. Not even a dog will howl for us. But if *we* write the history of this period of blood and tears—and I firmly believe we will—who will believe us? Nobody will *want* to believe us, because our disaster is the disaster of the entire civilized world." (Isaac Schiper to an unnamed prisoner, in Majdanek, summer 1943)

6. *All collectivities are made up of individuals, and every individual is a world.*

"I don't want to leave behind only statistics. Through my poems, sketches, and writings I want to enrich (a bad word, I know) the historical record that will be written in the future." (Władysław Szlengel, "What I Read to the Dead," January 1943)

"The experience of every Jew—and every Jew during the present War is a world in himself." (Ringelblum, "O.S.," late December 1942)

In the Warsaw Ghetto, and elsewhere across Europe, thousands of individual Jews put pen to paper, often amid panic and terror, to record details of their existence for readers in the future that they still believed in. The *Oyneg Shabes* Archive is a collection of such individual voices. It will stand as the outstanding twentieth-century rebuttal to impersonal forms of social science. Fernand Braudel's *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* is often described as the greatest work of twentieth-century history, but its eponymous hero is a subject for the historian on only the second to last of its more than 1,200 pages. Braudel's social history is the sort that is uneasy with human beings. But after Kassow's truly unforgettable book, can we ever again accept that understanding "the daunting complexity of social processes," as Ringelblum puts it, requires an indifference to the individual?

In 1944, while Ringelblum was completing his great work in a bunker, Braudel was completing his masterpiece in a German POW camp. In the half-century that followed, Braudel and his vision of social-science history triumphed. During those long years, Ringelblum's archive lay in the ground, or in restoration baths, or in closed cupboards, waiting, waiting, waiting. But what if Braudel had been killed and Ringelblum had survived? What would the practice of history have looked like these past decades? This possible past may only now be beginning. The age of Braudel's *Annales* School is long over. But the more we know of the *Oyneg Shabes* Archive, the more apparent it is that social history without a human face can never be practiced again.

The *Oyneg Shabes* project was driven by an acute tension between the imperative of national survival and the individual will to memory. But unlike the pursuit of individual glory, or of self-immolation in the whole, the members of the *Oyneg Shabes* Archive understood that their posthumous survival as individuals depended upon their practice of painstaking scholarly research. Though each was only a brick in the wall, if the wall would stand others might come and study the physiognomy of each and every brick. And then they would live again.

On August 3, 1942, with the Germans only a block away from the building at 68 Nowolipki Street, under which he was to bury the first cache of the archive, Israel Lichtenstein hurriedly deposited his testament—and in that instant gained his eternity. "I do not ask for any thanks, for any memorial, for any praise. I only wish to be remembered.... I wish my wife to be remembered, Gele Sekstein.... I wish my little daughter to be remembered. Margalit is 20 months old today.... She too deserves to be remembered." Working with him were two teenagers, David Graber and Nahum Grzywacz. They, too, left little reminders of themselves in the archive that they were burying. Grzywacz was eighteen years old, and when he heard that the Germans had blockaded his parents' building, he wrote, "I am going to run to my parents and see if they are all right. I don't know what's going to happen to me. *Remember, my name is Nahum Grzywacz.*" The emphasis is in the original. ◆

Charles Larmore
HOW MUCH CAN WE STAND?

A SECULAR AGE
By Charles Taylor
(Harvard University Press,
874 pp., $39.95)

I.

"Bored" and "uninformed" was how Philip Larkin felt on entering a church, wondering: "when churches fall completely out of use / What we shall turn them into." Unlike Britain, where the pews are generally empty, America is not likely to see its churches fall into disuse anytime soon. The apparent vitality of religion on this side of the Atlantic has long been invoked as a conspicuous contrast with the increasing de-Christianization of Europe. Yet the indifference that Larkin professed in his great early poem "Church Going" is widespread all the same. Most Americans say they believe in God and may label themselves Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish, but far fewer care enough to go further than that. Religion is largely absent from the art and culture of our time. America's reputation for religiosity stems from its evangelical movements, and they generally view themselves as struggling against the mainstream. For many Americans, religious belief is a childhood illusion that they have outgrown. They may retain a vague notion of there being some God "out there," but little more.

Here too, then, the same question arises that Larkin went on to pose: "What remains when disbelief has gone?" Once the old dogmas and rituals are a distant memory, no longer worth fighting against, how should we live? Should we simply get on with the cultivation of our own powers, pursuing the goals that lie within our reach, and forget about the grander spiritual fulfillment that religion once promised—the redemption of sin and suffering, the conviction that our fleeting existence matters from the standpoint of eternity? Despite his boredom with religious tradition, despite his general distrust of enthusiasm, Larkin disagreed that we should lower our sights: a life content to remain within the human sphere did not seem enough. "Someone will forever be surprising / A hunger in himself to be more serious," just like the poet inside the church. It is natural to seek some deeper meaning in which our limitations are transfigured, in which "all our compulsions meet, / Are recognized, and robed as destinies," even if we balk at actually believing in a God that would make such a meaning a reality.

This conflict in the modern mind is also the theme of Charles Taylor's new book. Taylor never mentions Larkin's poem,

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and as a practicing Catholic he has none of the same diffidence toward Christian doctrine. But *A Secular Age* likewise focuses on the contemporary sense of emptiness that comes with being unable to see the human world as part of a larger and purposeful whole. Religion may have assumed a marginal place in the public and intellectual culture of our time, and to many it may seem a dead issue or a sentimental relic, an afterthought, even a dangerous holdover needing to be expunged—but an existence devoid of any spiritual dimension fails, Taylor insists, to satisfy our deepest aspirations. Each of us has moments of "fullness" when we feel at one with the world, as though some higher force were flowing through all things and carrying a hidden meaning about how we should live.

Thus we find ourselves divided, and the "cross pressures" responsible for this "modern malaise" are the phenomena that Taylor sets out to explain. His overall aim is to show that our age is not really inimical to the possibility of faith, since the very values that shape the human self-affirmation we prize point to a larger horizon beyond the purely human. For an earlier version of this book, his Gifford Lectures of 1999, as well as for the rest of his life's work, Taylor received the prestigious Templeton Prize for "progress toward research or discoveries about spiritual realities." But *A Secular Age* is a deeply disappointing—and in some ways maddening—book.

For a start, its size is preposterous. No work of philosophy needs to be anywhere this long. Taylor pursues his subject from a historical angle, running through one area after another of European culture over the past one thousand years. "I have told a long story," he admits. He is right to think that one cannot understand modern secularism unless "one comes at it historically," but the method does not excuse the bulk. For the story that Taylor tells is not very novel, and the inordinate length of the historical narrative pushes to the sidelines the systematic arguments necessary to justify the philosophical message that he wishes to deliver.

Moreover, Taylor's scholarship leaves something to be desired. There are a number of slip-ups, the worst of which occurs when, in the course of describing the modern link between civilized government and polite manners, he throws in the following note: "This term 'polite' is, of course, another borrowing from the Greek term which 'civil' translates." Of course it is not—as any good dictionary would show. "Polite" has no connection to the Greek words "*polis*" and "*politikos*," but comes from the Latin verb "*polire*," meaning "polish." Also, the book has been poorly proofread, though pity the proofreader faced with this tome. The most memorable error appears in Taylor's discussion of Arius, a fourth-century Christian who denied the full divinity of Christ, in which we are introduced to "the Aryan refusal of identification of Christ and God." Yikes! (The proper adjective is "Arian.")

Most importantly, *A Secular Age* displays a shocking partiality in its approach. Taylor declares that he is focusing on "Latin Christendom," so Judaism and Islam naturally receive short shrift. But he also has not a single word to say about the great figures of twentieth-century Protestant theology—Barth, Bultmann, Bonhoeffer—whose concern lay centrally with modern secularization, though he goes on at length about Catholic theologians such as Jacques Maritain and Ivan Illich. This is not just a book written by a Christian for Christians. It is a book written by a Catholic for Catholics.

Taylor centers his story around what appears to be a striking shift in the very nature of religious belief. In the past, nearly everyone believed in God as a matter of course. Atheism was well-nigh unimaginable. Today, by contrast, many reject the existence of God out of hand, quite routinely, and even the staunchest defenders of faith know that they might have chosen otherwise. How did so momentous a change come about? What happened between 1500 and 2000 to turn belief from a norm into an option?

Each of us, according to Taylor, relies on some answer to this question, however tacit or superficial. We cannot live in a secular age without some view about what it means to have left behind an age of faith. The trouble is that these views generally take the form of "subtraction stories." They portray the modern world as having come into being by sloughing off the illusions of religion and letting the human condition finally appear for what it has been all along. Accounts of this sort, Taylor maintains, embody a fundamental mistake about modernity. They miss the fact that to see nature as operating by laws of its own, not by God's purposes, and to see society as bound together by human interests, not by sacred ritual, depends on a substantive set of values, cognitive and moral, that are by no means the universal property of mankind, but have come to be espoused in the West for historically contingent reasons. Our secular age did not arise by a process of subtraction, but through the creation of a whole new conception of man and world.

ANTHONY RUSSO

Secularization can mean three different things, all of them distinctive features of modern Western society. First, there is the separation between church and state, emerging in the seventeenth century after one hundred years of religious war in Europe and transferring the basis of political authority from divine will to notions of consent and individual rights. No longer sustained by public affirmation and enforcement, religion has turned into a private affair, and as a result it has lost its influence over more and more people. And so secularization also involves—this is its second sense, for Taylor—the all-too-familiar decline of religious belief in the West.

Yet these two developments could not have occurred, he claims, without a fundamental alteration in worldview. There had to emerge a conception of nature and society which Taylor dubs "the immanent frame." This is his third, and decisive, notion of secularism. The natural and the supernatural, the human and the divine, came to be so sharply marked off from one another that making sense of the world around us appeared possible in this-worldly terms alone. Only within such a framework could political community dispense with the aura of religious unity, and people find ways of giving meaning to their lives without looking beyond the human realm. Only on this basis could belief in God cease to be the immediate and uncontroversial certainty that it once was, the inescapable backdrop to every thought and endeavor, and become instead a possibility that on reflection people might either endorse or reject—"one option among others and frequently not the easiest to embrace."

How, according to Taylor, did this intellectual revolution take place? Obviously, the rise of modern science played a great role. But in order for scientific inquiry to take off in the form that we recognize today, nature had to be emptied of the spirits, portents, and cosmic purposes that once seemed a fact of everyday experience. It had to be conceived as fundamentally an impersonal order of matter and force, governed by causal laws. This conception of nature was itself the expression of a new attitude toward the world that Taylor calls "disengagement,"

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the distancing outlook of "the buffered self." People learned to stand back from the forces of nature around them (as well as within them), and to regulate their actions so as no longer to feel at the mercy of hidden powers, and thus to turn the vast expanse of matter in motion before them into a domain for prediction and control. Nature ceased to be mind-like, full of the signs and wonders invoked in Shakespeare's plays, and became instead a neutral object of sober inquiry for the only minds there are, namely our own.

What inspired this shift was not, Taylor insists, a decision to dispel the mists of religion and look reality at last squarely in the face. It was instead a new ethic of self-possession and instrumental manipulation, which exalted "the independent, disengaged subject, reflexively controlling his own thought-processes, 'self-responsibly,' in Husserl's famous phrase." Contrary to one well-known but naïve sort of subtraction story, modern science did not arise through the substitution of observation for fantasy. It involved the systematic combination of experiment and mathematics, designed (as Bacon and Kant said) to "put nature on the rack" and "constrain it to give answers to questions of reason's own devising." Epistemology, Taylor claims, is ultimately rooted in ethics. We form our beliefs in accordance with conceptions of method and evidence that tell us in effect how we should respect our dignity as thinking beings in dealing with a world where truth is elusive. And these ideals of intellectual virtue vary from one historical epoch to the next.

A corresponding sea-change occurred in the understanding of society and indeed in the very structure of social life, a transformation that Taylor calls the "Great Disembedding." Beginning in the sixteenth century, the institutions and the rituals of a hierarchical community, its different orders united by their respective positions in God's creation, gave way to the conviction that each person is responsible for his own conduct and tied to others by relations of mutual benefit. No longer defined by their rank and station, people now viewed their various roles as so many obstacles or opportunities to be tackled on the way to becoming themselves. Thus there arose the modern idea of the individual, self-directed and encountering society from without, the sort of protagonist we begin to meet in such early novels as *Moll Flanders* and *Tom Jones*. Here again, even more clearly, the change cannot be understood as the recovery of what we have always been like, buried beneath the deceptions of religion. Modern individualism is an innovation, a disciplining of mind and body aimed at our becoming able to think for ourselves.

Such, according to Taylor, are the values that have created the new picture of nature and society characteristic of the modern mind. The processes of disengagement and disembedding have bleached away the sacred from the fabric of the world. They have left in its wake a framework of immanence, in which belief in God now appears optional, no longer essential to the understanding of life and reality. But this is only part of Taylor's tale. A further dimension brings us to the moral of his story.

So little did our secular age take shape by casting off the illusions of religion, he continues, that its sources lie in the very effort to live up to the ideals that the age of faith espoused. Long before the Protestant Reformation, beginning already in the eleventh century, Western Christianity grew increasingly dissatisfied with the institutions and the practices that it had acquired over the years. In a number of ways, the church found itself caught up in the same basic conflict: it preached a religion of individual salvation, addressed to all and invoking a transcendent God, but it had compromised these essential tenets by allowing the masses of the faithful to go on living in habits of mind typical of the pagan world that the Christian faith was supposed to have overthrown.

As a result, medieval Christendom became imbued with the spirit of reform. Aiming to bring the lives of all into line with true Christian doctrine, it attacked magical views of nature as idolatrous and rejected conformity to custom in favor of personal devotion. Not only the radical Lollards and Hussites, but a host of movements operating within the bosom of the Church—the Franciscans, for instance, or the Brethren of the Common Life, inspired by Thomas à Kempis's manual *The Imitation of Christ*—all sought in their different ways to narrow the gap between elite and laity, between the asceticism of the monastic orders and the superstitions of ordinary priests and believers. In place of the veneration of saints and relics, worship was refocused on developing a proper awe before God's majesty. Miracle-mongering was reined in, and pagan rites such as dancing around the maypole were discouraged. More and more the principle gained ground that the routines of everyday life are a domain in which everyone, whatever his place in society, is able to practice the virtues of the Gospel.

Modern secularism, in Taylor's account, has its roots in this centuries-long effort to make the Christian faith a reality for all, not in the dawning realization that God is an illusion. The new attitude toward the world characteristic of modern science, reducing all of nature to matter in motion, would not have taken hold without the religious significance that it seemed then to embody. In banning from creation every trace of magical power and natural purpose, it glorified God's supremacy, and promised man the means to master the environment so as to be better able to do God's work. So too, the individualist ethic of self-discipline and personal responsibility began as the pursuit of godliness, commanding each person to stand back from the ways of the world, take his own life in hand, and make himself into the servant of the divine will.

"The irony," Taylor notes, is that the "rage for order" and the investment of everyday life with a new significance and solidity, "so much the fruit of devotion and faith, prepare[d] the ground for an escape from faith, into a purely immanent world." But this irony is not a cause for dejection. It is the peg on which Taylor hangs his deeply apologetic project. Bringing out the Christian sources of our secular age is meant to show that secularism does not really close off the possibility of faith. Science, Taylor declares, cannot refute belief,

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because science rests on attitudes toward the world whose original rationale was religious in character. The same is true of modern individualism. It is possible to regard our autonomous conceptions of nature and society as sufficient unto themselves—to give them, as he likes to say, a "closed spin"; but we need not do so. We can also go for an "open spin" and regard them as part of a more encompassing spiritual reality. In Taylor's view, "exclusive humanism" is an option, no more—just as belief itself has become one.

Moreover, he holds, there are good reasons to think that a life lived in strictly human terms, closed off to a deeper dimension, cannot prove satisfying in the end. Western culture has for several centuries now been racked by a distinctively modern malaise. "One can hear," Taylor observes,

> all sorts of complaints about "the present age" throughout history: that it is fickle, full of vice and disorder, lacking in greatness or high deeds, full of blasphemy and viciousness. But what you won't hear at other times and places is one of the commonplaces of our day … that our age suffers from a threatened loss of meaning. This malaise is specific to a buffered identity, whose very invulnerability opens it to the danger that not just evil spirits, cosmic forces or gods won't "get to" it, but that nothing significant will stand out for it.

We moderns tend to live at cross-purposes with ourselves. Committed to the values of rational control and individual fulfillment, we find it difficult to acknowledge, though we long for it all the same, some commanding vision of man's place in the world that would show us the point of these ideals and serve as our ultimate object of allegiance. This inner division shows forth clearly in the poetry of the Romantic era, and ever since. Beauty is no longer thought to be part of nature in itself, awaiting imitation by the poet. It has to be revealed through the work of the imagination. But the imagination being creative as well as responsive, the deeper harmony with nature the poem evokes is no sooner glimpsed than it is lost or ironized, rendered "ontologically indeterminate," Taylor says, as the objectifying stance of the modern mind reasserts its right to define what is real.

Wordsworth is Taylor's prime example, and rightly so. In a famous passage of *The Prelude* he asserts that it was the imagination that revealed to him "the invisible world" beyond the brute reality of the Alps he was crossing:

> Our destiny, our nature, and our home,
> Is with infinitude—and only there;
> With hope it is, hope that can never die,
> Effort, and expectation, and desire,
> And something evermore about
> to be.…

We cannot tell, and nor could he, whether this invisible world really exists independent of him or only within his mind. Its infinitude is precisely the inability to nail it down.

This posture of ambiguity is hard to maintain. It easily tips over into an aestheticism that substitutes art for the world, and practices art for art's sake, as in Pater or Mallarmé. But it can also yield a different sort of resolution. Art can turn the suggestion of hidden depths into an epiphany of the divine, pushing beyond the bounds of immanence to an affirmation of God's presence in creation, as in the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins:

> The world is charged with the grandeur
> of God.
> It will flame out, like shining from
> shook foil.

Taylor's sympathies lie clearly in this direction—not with aestheticism, but not with ambiguity either. Hopkins is the poetic hero of his book, the center of the last chapter, aptly titled "Conversions."

Commitment, not hesitation, is the language that Taylor prefers. The crucial question for him is whether to take the immanent frame as closed or open. Either way, he contends, we rely on a "leap of faith … [an] over-all sense of things that anticipates or leaps ahead of the reasons we can muster for it." Taylor shows little patience with vacillation. That would be failing to heed those intimations of a deeper transcendent reality that we feel when we are moved in every fiber of our being by the power of the good or by the beauty in the world. "Can you really give ontological space for these features short of admitting what you still want to deny, for instance, some reference to the transcendent, or to a larger cosmic force, or whatever?"

Taylor's answer is no. And there is no "whatever" about it. It is, he says ecumenically, "the God of Abraham" we are then encountering. Even those who cleave unhesitatingly to the immanent frame, provided that they too experience moments of "fullness," are responding to the reality that is God. They are simply "misrecognizing" it. At times, demurely, he calls this a "theistic hunch." But for Taylor it is not really a hunch at all. It is a guiding conviction.

II.

Plainly, *A Secular Age* is an extremely ambitious book. But how convincing is its story about the origins of our world? How persuasive is its claim that religious faith provides the best answer to the many cross pressures of modernity? To readers familiar with the classics of modern social theory, Taylor's historical account will sound familiar, almost banal. Though covering an immense array of figures, texts, and cultural movements, it follows closely in the footsteps of the theory of secularization pioneered by Max Weber at the beginning of the last century. For Weber too, our secular world was the unintended consequence of religious forces aiming to practice a purer Christianity. Moreover, the "disengagement" and "disembedding" in which this dialectic, according to Taylor, played itself out, are none other than the processes that Weber famously described as "the disenchantment of the world" and the triumph of "the Protestant ethic."

True, there are some differences. Instead of tracing, like Taylor, a continuity between the Reformation and the reform movements of medieval Christianity, Weber located a decisive turning point in the "innerworldly asceticism" of the early Protestant sects. And indeed, did not the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witness a dramatic rupture with the age of faith that had come before? Weber did not deny that the Reformation sprang from the tensions inhabiting the medieval compromise between a monotheistic Gospel and a semi-pagan devotion to miracles and saints. In fact, the term by which Taylor refers to this mix, "the unstable post-Axial equilibrium" which provided a constant impetus for reform, derives from Karl Jaspers, who was Weber's disciple. Jaspers's theory of the "Axial Age," or the last millennium B.C.E., when universalist and rationalizing religions arose to challenge the cult of magic and the worship of local gods, drew upon the grand themes of Weber's sociology of religion expounded in his monumental *Economy and Society*. So to a certain extent, this first difference is one of emphasis—Weber stressing the Reformation's break with the past, Taylor the medieval background that made it possible. No doubt the difference has something to do with the fact that Weber was a lapsed Protestant and Taylor is an ardent Catholic.

But there is obviously a more substantial difference. Weber shared none of Taylor's belief that faith can be rendered intellectually credible, even if he agreed that the roots of our secular age lie in the religious fervor of the past. He

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expressed only scorn for those who "cannot bear the fate of the times like a man." Not that Weber felt at home in the disenchanted, rationalized world that we have inherited. Far from it, as everyone knows. We live today, he bleakly observed, in a "polar night of icy darkness," an "iron cage" in which we have become "specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart." Yet he remained determined to face this world without flinching. Taylor would have struck him as one of the softies who, rushing into the arms of the church, happily commit a "sacrifice of the intellect." Weber's motto, as he confessed to his wife, was this: "I want to see how much I can stand."

That is hardly Taylor's principle. Consider what he has to say about Weber himself. He acknowledges the similarities in their historical accounts, while pointing out his own different emphasis on the long-term tendency toward reform in the Christian tradition. About their disagreement concerning the proper reaction to our secular world, however, Taylor is content to remark that the two of them simply give a different "spin" to the immanent frame. He opts for an "open" reading, Weber for a "closed" one: "My understanding of the immanent frame is that, properly understood, it allows of both readings, without compelling us to either. If you grasp our predicament without ideological distortion, and without blinders, then you see that going one way or another requires what is often called a 'leap of faith.'" But this is a poor line of argument. The choice is not simply between open and closed. Weber's outlook certainly has its defects: he might have wondered more about what reasons he could have in a disenchanted world to value intellectual integrity with an almost religious zeal. But leaping in the opposite direction is not the only alternative to his closed-mindedness.

We know a great deal about the workings of nature and human society. What may lie beyond them, if anything, is a matter of conjecture, at least so far as generally accepted modes of inquiry can determine. Taylor appears to forget the difference between the two. We may hope that there is something more to things than is contained in the disenchanted picture of modern science. There may even be moments in our experience when we feel moved by what may be some deeper spiritual reality. (Weber himself might have acknowledged such a feeling if he had reflected on his own passionate devotion to truth.) But intimations are not an adequate basis for jumping to metaphysical or religious conclusions. They should be seen for what they are: inklings, no more. In such situations, leaping is precisely what we ought *not* to do.

The response warranted by our modern predicament, it seems to me, is not to commit ourselves one way or the other about whether the immanent frame is all there is. We ought to remain unsure, hesitating, groping, searching for some insight, but always remaining wary, and concerned with the integrity of our beliefs. We ought to leave open the possibility that the immanent frame is open. But that is a very different thing from asserting, through a leap of faith, that it is indeed open—that our secular conception of the world really is incomplete.

None of this impugns the faith of those who do believe in God. If they have the conviction of God's presence in the world and in their lives, I have not the evidence to show that they are wrong. But these are not the people whom Taylor is addressing. His target is those who do not believe, but find themselves to varying degrees caught up in "the modern malaise," dissatisfied with a purely secular existence yet reluctant to embrace something more. When he insinuates that they must take a stand and opt for either an open or a closed view of immanence, Taylor is rushing them to judgment where none is justified. For them, Wordsworth, and not Hopkins, must remain the model.

Taylor's other main line of apologetic argument is little better. It leans on his thesis that epistemology is ultimately rooted in ethics. People who claim that there is no warrant for religious belief, given what science now tells us about the world, fail to see that modern science has been driven by certain intellectual values—in particular, by the values of rational control and individual conscience—which arose historically, and within a Christian context. From the standpoint of faith, therefore, these values can still take on the spiritual hue that they once possessed. And being historically contingent, they have more the character of a "new construction" than a "simple discovery." Consequently, they are open to revision. Constructed, Taylor cautions, is not supposed to mean merely invented. "To say that these [values] are 'constructions' is not to say that the issues here are unarbitrable by reason." And yet "their arbitration is much more complicated, like that between Kuhnian paradigms, and also involves issues of hermeneutical adequacy."

Readers familiar with the lay of the land in contemporary philosophy will know that bringing in the fuzzy business of "paradigm shifts" and "hermeneutics" is a sure way to guarantee that the issues will not be settled. Some straightforward reflection shows that, at least in the case of the disenchantment of nature, the underlying values are more than simply "constructed." Imagine that, having drained the natural world of all magical powers and secret sympathies and reconceived it as an impersonal order of causal laws, physics had remained what it had largely been like in antiquity and the middle ages—a mere succession of different theories, each one a fresh speculation. That, of course, is precisely what did not happen. Modern science became a cumulative and publicly verifiable enterprise. New theories deepened the understanding of nature already achieved by their predecessors, which is as much as to say that science at last got on the track of the truth.

Now consider Taylor's thesis that this process has been driven by an ethic of rational manipulation and self-discipline, which was a modern innovation. This thesis is true, and he is right to insist on its importance. But the proper conclusion to draw is this: if this ethic is a "construction," it is a "discovery" as well. Developing it has been tantamount to learning what is the most fruitful attitude toward nature, at least if our aim is to know how it works. There is no room in this case for playing off "construction" against "discovery," as Taylor tendentiously tries to do. Discoveries are no less real for being historically contingent.

So both Taylor's lines of argument fail to lend any real credibility to the possibility of faith in our secular age. Indeed, they receive only schematic attention over the course of this very long book. Instead they are overrun by an avalanche of historical detail. But this is not the most distressing aspect of *A Secular Age*. There is the more worrisome matter of Taylor's general attitude toward life.

Taylor appears to think that living at cross-purposes with ourselves is intolerable, a human failure. In his view, we need to give our dilemmas a "spin," and "leap" to conclusions about how they are to be handled. But why? Is not being drawn in contrary directions an abiding feature of the human condition? Would we not do better to get used to the fact that our lives are always fraught with essential contradictions and ambiguities? Why should we prefer Taylor's quick fixes to the great enterprise of learning to live with ourselves and our circumstances? Our secular age is certainly of two minds, divided as it is between an ethic of rational control and

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human well-being and a longing for some deeper structure of meaning beyond. Yet on Taylor's own account, the age of faith was unstable, too—a post-Axial compromise between Christ's teachings and pre-Christian survivals that spawned throughout the medieval period one reform effort after another. We have never been, and we will never be, at one with ourselves.

Fundamental conflicts may go unacknowledged, of course. And once we perceive them, we can no doubt find philosophers—spin doctors, really—who will teach us how to make them vanish by a misleading use of words (such as glib oppositions between "open" and "closed," "construction" and "discovery"). But problems, when they are genuine, cannot be talked away. They disappear only when they are actually solved, by our finding better ways, backed up by reasons, of making sense of the world. And even then, the result is bound to bring some new source of inner conflict in its wake. This is not secular. It is human. ◆

Mark Polizzotti
THE SMIRK

I AM A BEAUTIFUL MONSTER: POETRY, PROSE, AND PROVOCATION
By Francis Picabia
Translated by Marc Lowenthal
(MIT Press, 477 pp., $39.95)

"He had 7 yachts, 127 automobiles, and that is little compared to his women," Francis Picabia's last wife wrote of him in 1949, with the painter's grinning complicity. Spanish and Cuban on his diplomat father's side, related through his mother to the conservative Parisian haute bourgeoisie, Picabia was born into a life of privilege in 1879 and, by virtually all accounts, he never grew up. The boy's mother died when he was seven, leaving him wanting for nothing except a stable emotional context: the "womanless" home in which he was raised by his father, grandfather, and uncle offered comfort and culture but little warmth. In adulthood, with the carelessness of abundance taken for granted, Picabia passed through countries, acquisitions, friends, wives, lovers, artistic styles, and ideas as if they were all his private playground, quickly tiring of the previous flash enthusiasm and always eager for more, more, more.

Like Marcel Duchamp, his lifelong accomplice, rival, and fellow jester at the court of High Modernism, Picabia stands as both an indispensable entry in the avant-garde index and one of those Teflon eccentrics to whom the available categories never quite stick. But where Duchamp's life traces a *reductio ad absurdum* of personal wants, Picabia's often seems an endless quest for newer and bigger pleasures. Germaine Everling, the painter's companion of sixteen years—the most acute commentaries come, fittingly, from his wives and mistresses, who saw right through him even as they succumbed to his charms—remarked that he had "a great thirst for events … little matter to him under what form they presented themselves: women, houses, automobiles, pets." And she relates how one day Picabia bought a country mechanic's garage on a whim; moved lock, stock, and barrel into the upper floor; and made a go of managing the repair shop—until the novelty wore off and he moved back to the capital.

Episodes such as these (and they are legion) have long fueled the common perception of Picabia as the dilettante's dilettante. But there is also a darker, more measured, more anxious side to his restless personality; and it is in his poems and aphorisms, rather than in his copious plastic output, that this anxiety allowed itself freest expression. Marc Lowenthal, who edited and translated this wonderful book—the first comprehensive volume in English of Picabia's writings—suggests an explanation: writing was what Picabia did when he was unable to paint, either through circumstance or, more often, psychological impediment. In other words, and somewhat tautologically, the writings reflect the malaise that spawned them. This thesis has been floated by some of Picabia's biographers, who have described how the painter latched on to the pen when he couldn't wield the brush. But here the combination of Lowenthal's pertinent glosses and a generous helping of illustrative texts makes for one of the most persuasive arguments yet advanced that there was more behind the clown mask than just a clown.

It is, admittedly, a hard mask to penetrate. Picabia's best-known work, visual as well as verbal, is characterized by a fierce devil-may-care smirk that dares the viewer to take it, or anything else, seriously. A large part of its effect, which charmed the rebellious younger generation even as it infuriated most of the painter's contemporaries, comes from its refusal to be pinned down, its spirit of disregard that snubbed both labels and rules. This disregard applied not solely to his art: called up for service during World War I, Picabia used his family connections to get sent on a vague mission to Cuba, which he then abandoned once his ship docked in Manhattan (an act of desertion that made him avoid France for the next two years). There he joined his old friend Duchamp, along with Man Ray, Alfred Stieglitz, and the unclassifiable Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, to develop the cluster of ideas and works retroactively dubbed New York Dada.

Until this point, the former child prodigy and Arts Décoratifs student had churned out derivative canvases that by turns aped Impressionism, Fauvism, Futurism, and Cubism. He now began exploring, partly under Duchamp's influence, the visual motifs for which he is best known: precisely rendered engine parts and hardware items sporting titles such as *Amorous Parade* and *Shining Vagina*, which both translated the painter's lifelong ambivalence toward women and provoked a gratifying scandal among the public. Still, when later asked the inevitable question of what he had done during the war, his only answer was: "I was bored to hell."

After a year of New York high life, even Picabia the consummate hedonist had enough, and he and his first wife, the musician Gabrielle Buffet, moved to Barcelona in the summer of 1916. It was during this period that the painter first turned to writing poems, one of which contains what might be a backward glance at his recent American experience:

Everywhere men and women with
music I enjoy
publicly or in secret
unleash their sterile passions.
Opium.
Whisky.
Tango.

This poem is from *Fifty-Two Mirrors* (1917), Picabia's first collection of verse,

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which in the words of his biographer William Camfield "mirror[s] Picabia's response to the conditions of his life—sometimes clearly but in other instances so darkly that even the most sympathetic reader cannot penetrate their veiled, perverse reflections." This sense of fragmented depiction, mixing clarity with opacity, is a staple of the modernist aesthetic, but in Picabia's case the contrasts have less to do with literary technique than with his own conflicting impulses. The mirrors are trained almost exclusively on the author, and the glints they give off are not just for effect: in the present case, Picabia was clearly no stranger to sterile passions and "tangos," and behind the shorthand "Opium" lies a drug habit that would dog the painter for the next decade and more.

It was also in Barcelona that Picabia founded the journal *391,* which would prove one of the most influential of the avant-garde periodicals. Between 1917 and 1924, it was a testing ground for various experimental currents and—after Picabia's fabled meeting with Tristan Tzara—a primary mouthpiece for Dada. More than anything, *391* showcased its editor's own jottings, providing an arena for his bolder literary experiments—including samples of automatic writing that predate by several months André Breton and Philippe Soupault's seminal volume *The Magnetic Fields*. It also served as a kind of blog *avant la lettre*, whimsically reporting on the doings of Picabia and his friends ("Max JACOB, declares that his ass is hysterical") and on whatever else came into his head ("Cubism is a cathedral of shit"). *391* has been called a "magazine in transit," and understandably so: less than a year after moving to Spain, Picabia was back in New York, the first four issues under his arm. Later that year he returned to Barcelona and Paris, then in February 1918 joined Gabrielle and their children in Switzerland. The magazine's successive mastheads, with their fluctuating editorial addresses, track his rambling itinerary.

Picabia's main reason for heading to Switzerland was to undergo treatment for a nervous breakdown: not only had he gone back to living in the fast lane, but his marriage was faltering because of his addiction and his new involvement with Germaine Everling, whom he had met during a separation from Gabrielle. By the end of 1917 the painter was shuttling between his family and his mistress, and when the Picabias settled in Gstaad, Everling, by pre-arrangement, took a hotel room in nearby Lausanne—making Picabia's attempts at a rest cure fairly pointless. On doctor's orders, Picabia severely curtailed his painting—and in a typical bit of perverseness dedicated one of his few watercolors of the time to that same physician—but he made up for it with a vastly increased outpouring of poems, many of which offer the same brooding self-reflection as the pieces in *Fifty-Two Mirrors*.

Nor was he content with the complications of a mere two women in his life. Before leaving New York, he had indulged in a tryst with Isadora Duncan; and in Lausanne, all the while flitting between Buffet and Everling, he took up with a young artist—the affair ending when the woman's husband came after the feckless Romeo with a pistol. In the fall of 1918, when Picabia's doctor sent him to the spa town of Bex-les-Bains to avoid the Spanish flu pandemic, the painter took both his family and Everling with him and installed everyone in a suite of adjoining rooms.

PICABIA'S AMOROUS PARADE, however, fizzles next to the embroiled complexities and quicksand alliances of his involvement with Paris Dada. The catalyst was the painter's correspondence with Tristan Tzara, Dada's head theorist and publicist, in the summer of 1918. Shortly before this, Tzara had unveiled his "Dada Manifesto 1918" ("Every man must shout: there is great destructive, negative work to be done. Sweep, clean"), winning international renown among the disillusioned young artists and writers just emerging from the war. By early 1919, Picabia and Tzara had met in Zurich and collaborated on a new issue of *391*, and when Picabia settled back in Paris soon afterward, he began spreading the Dada gospel. Among those most eager to hear it were the young poets André Breton, Louis Aragon, and Paul Éluard, the kernel of the future Surrealist group, who had been experimenting with forms of poetry that mirrored what Tzara and Picabia were producing, and who were ripe for the scorched-earth assault the movement promised. Breton got to know Picabia at the end of 1919. When Tzara made his own migration to Paris soon afterward, taking over Everling's apartment (where Picabia was now living) and Breton's magazine *Littérature* in the process, the resulting concentration of energies unleashed one of the most rambunctious periods in the history of the avant-garde.

Dada got off to a rousing start in Paris with a series of provocative statements and performances, and at first Picabia was an eager participant—to a degree that even his avid young acolytes soon found taxing. "Each time a Dada demonstration was planned," Breton later recalled, "Picabia gathered us in his salon and *enjoined* us, one after the other, to come up with *ideas* for it." But true to form, Picabia also kept his distance from the collective shenanigans. Though he contributed a number of skits and manifestoes, he declined to perform them himself, leaving his junior colleagues to face the hecklers as he watched from an upper box of the theater—"something to keep in mind," as Lowenthal dryly notes, "when reading a line such as 'Hiss, yell, smash my face in…'"

Despite such buffers, Dada is the context in which Picabia truly flourished, the one label that, despite everything, manages to keep at least a corner of itself attached to his oeuvre. Not only did it provide a spur for the aggressive "anti-art" that he was now producing (such as the painting *The Cacodylic Eye* in 1921, covered in his friends' graffiti and looking, as one critic put it, like "the interior of a pissoir"), but with its belligerent laughter and combative refusal of all standing values, Dada was the ideal petri dish for Picabia's virulent humor. Perhaps nowhere was this better exercised than in the painter's defenses of the much-stigmatized movement. When André Gide issued a condescending review of a Dada show, Picabia retorted, "Reading Gide aloud for ten minutes will give you bad breath." And when the poet Pierre Reverdy allegedly sent the Dadaists a violently insulting letter, he lost no time in publishing a rebuttal: "Monsieur Reverdy has just sent me an urgent letter … to tell me that he'd like to make me eat a bit of his shit. Dear Monsieur Reverdy, whom I do not have the honor of knowing, it seems to me that ever since you devoted your life to poetry you have been trying to make everyone eat a bit of your shit." (Not too surprisingly, Picabia's subsequent, "anti-Dada" writings are nearly indistinguishable from the ones written in support of Dada and its members.)

Nor was Picabia granted immunity from his own barbs. Many of the articles and aphorisms with which he prolifically filled *391* and other Dada periodicals targeted himself just as easily as they skewered his antagonists. When the Cubist painter Albert Gleizes sarcastically tarred Picabia a "funny guy," Picabia appropriated the nickname as a byline. He also signed himself the "Cannibal," the "Alcoholic," the "Pickpocket," the "Idiot," and "Picabia who knows nothing, nothing, nothing"—all manifestations of what

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William Camfield calls his "'I screw myself' technique." As the painter famously wrote in 1920, "Whoever is with me is against me."

Given the personalities involved, it is no surprise that Dada soon began to sour, as the protagonists' conflicting agendas jostled to the fore. Angry with Tzara for trying to appropriate the Dada "brand" and with Breton for the moral gravitas he was seeking to impose on the movement, Picabia broke from his friends in May 1921, in a widely circulated newspaper interview: "The Dada spirit only really existed from 1913 to 1918 … after that, it became as uninteresting as the output of the École des Beaux-Arts," he declared. "Dada, you see, was not serious, and … if some people now do take it seriously, it is because it is dead!"

Still, Picabia, who shifted allegiance as easily as he changed his socks, was not entirely through with his Paris comrades-in-arms. Having earlier sided with Tzara against Breton, he now sided with Breton against Tzara, once Breton himself had become disillusioned with Dada. The two men maintained cordial relations until 1924, when Breton launched the Surrealist movement as such—a movement that Picabia, as the avant-garde's elder statesman, felt should be under his leadership. A final showdown found the self-styled chiefs in Breton's studio—the rest of the group in attendance like spoils waiting to be claimed—trading insults until the painter, bested at his own game, finally stormed out. Soon afterward, he cranked up *391* one last time to lampoon the new Surrealist enterprise. Despite this, Breton retained enough admiration for Picabia to include some brief texts in his *Anthology of Black Humor* some two decades later, though he prefaced them by remarking that the "painter and poet" in Picabia was often eclipsed by the "much-less-inspired polemicist."

With equal parts acumen and shortsightedness, Breton's remark touches on two of the main elements to greet the reader of *I Am a Beautiful Monster*: the uneven quality of Picabia's inspirations and (despite Breton's judgment) his consummate talent for invective and insult—at least part of the time. Indeed, while some of these texts display all the manic novelty of the avant-garde heyday, a number of others sound merely like random musings or unsupported bravado: the "provocations" touted in the subtitle might just as often be termed "prevarications." And behind many of them one can hear the self-congratulatory laughter of someone who knows he is being awfully clever, when it isn't the resentful snicker of a man who feels his genius is undervalued.

The anthology's chronological arrangement allows for a bird's-eye view of Picabia's literary development, further encouraged by Lowenthal's division of the texts into discrete periods. The first section, "Pre-Dada" (1917–1919), mainly includes darkly self-reflexive poetry with titles such as "Void," "Failed," and *The Mortician's Athlete*, and with allusions to the author's illnesses, chemical and sexual addictions, peripatetic existence, and overall dissatisfaction with life and lot. At times these writings amount to no more than juvenile pouting: "A modern society woman is an almost masculine stupidity" or "I loathe / Cézanne's painting / it bores me." But elsewhere a surprising self-knowledge peeps through the bluster. One poem from 1917, written during a separation from Gabrielle Buffet, confesses: "I have excuses/And lack strength and courage," while a short prose text from a few years later allows that "My only goal is a silkier life and an end to my lying."

In the texts from the Dada period proper (1919–1921), Breton's "much-less-inspired polemicist" takes center stage. This section contains some of Picabia's most quoted utterances and suggests a man fully at home in the chaos that he helped to foment. The manifestoes pound home the movement's nihilistic message, in an odd (and similarly repetitive) anticipation of 1970s punk. "Dada … is like your idols: nothing / like your politicians: nothing / like your heroes: nothing," rants Picabia's most famous contribution to the genre. Similarly, the poems he wrote during this period, collected in books such as *Thoughts Without Language, Unique Eunuch*, and the celebrated *Jesus Christ Rastaquouère* (which garnered praise even from the curmudgeonly Ezra Pound), ratchet up the tone, introducing a sharper sense of cruelty and crudity:

> I'm going to whip your senses …
> I smother the pussy enveloping my hand
> I don't really know why these scenes resemble rags.
> I kiss your mouth while vomiting …

Still, after a while what one mainly hears is the difficulty of sustaining an effective attack. How many times can one hector an audience and still keep its ear? This was the problem that tormented Breton and his friends, who soon retreated from the sterility of Dada's program and began exploring the more verdant byways that ultimately led to Surrealism.

Picabia, meanwhile, chose simply to leave the building. After his break with Dada, he spent the late 1920s and 1930s living it up on the Côte d'Azur, either in a castle he built for Everling and their son near Cannes or on one of his several houseboats. He consorted with the rich and indolent, hosting fabulous galas at the casino in the evenings and motoring around by day in one of his 127 deluxe autos. His artwork, once joyously scandalous, now became (in Lowenthal's words) an "outpouring of figurative and abstract kitsch." Practically his only writings from this period are sour-grapes retorts to art critics, who had gotten used to the Dada provocateur and now damned him for his conservative twist: "If there is an artist too different from the others, a poor wretch who shows off, there is nothing to do but bully him, cut him down … [or else] they'll punish him even better: they'll stop talking about him!"

The final sections of the book, covering the period before World War II through the painter's death in 1953, evince a bitter retrenchment—manifest in Picabia's socially regressive politics, in his art, and in his poetry, which abandons bravado for previously unsounded notes of reticence and fear. The breathtaking egotism of the earlier books gives way to an apprehensive topicality about

Late Pietà

Because, in spite of the splendor
it's revealed in him, in spite of a lifetime
unbinding its homeliest and sublime
expression from locked, stone-fast torpor,
the body is not at the end godlike, bends
in the wrong places, drags its feet and head
sloppily, incontinent—let it dangle here,
pregnant with true origin and destiny.
And because at the end someone must be there,
some one or two (for it is heavy) to suffer
its new demands, let them be tender, a worn
father, a young mother, like his, though neither
would comprehend anymore his need
now—dim memory? premonition?—to be lifted.

PHILIP WHITE

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the impending war, even to a pathetically transparent emotional neediness:

> If you wanted, completely naked,
> I would grow old
> with your smile, hands on your breasts.
>
> Whatever you do, don't throw me
> into the void!

These lines, from the aptly titled "Sentimental Poem," were most likely written for Olga Mohler, the Picabias' young nanny who became the painter's third wife in 1940—while Everling, who had weathered one too many of these dalliances, quit the household for good. The marriage to Olga, like its predecessors, seems to have run over its own share of potholes and inspired many of Picabia's late writings, some of them among the most rudely acerbic of his entire oeuvre.

By the time World War II broke out, the effusiveness that had characterized so much of Picabia's life shrank to almost nothing. The once-fabulous fortune dwindled, the yachts and the fancy cars were sold off. In place of houseboats and casinos, the Picabias spent the war in a cramped apartment and got around by bicycle. In 1945 the perpetual nomad and world traveler came full circle and returned to live in the once-opulent apartment of his childhood, which bad real estate transactions had by now shrunk to a single studio. Even his writings reflect this diminishment: Picabia's final collections, sometimes composed of no more than a few sentences (and not necessarily by him), were issued by a fledgling publisher in editions of fewer than fifty copies. As the Dada joker confessed in one of his last poems, "life has worn out / my hope / and no longer amuses me."

But fortunes change, and at this point Picabia's place in the history of modernism is assured. His influence on later currents such as Pop and Concept Art is palpable; and when we review the cultural history of his time, it is often Picabia's quick-witted tartness that exposes just how bland most of his contemporaries could be. Marc Lowenthal has done a superb job of organizing the painter's writings into a fairly coherent whole, and his introductions to the various groupings set the context as well as can be expected (though a little more biographical background would have been welcome). MIT Press has also designed the book so as to suggest at least some of the originals' typographic cacophony. As to the translations, while one could quibble with a few of the choices—stage hands use spotlights, not "projectors"; "let's always try" (*essayons toujours*) could more idiomatically be rendered "let's give it a shot"; and so on—in the main Lowenthal matches Picabia gripe for snipe.

There are also some interesting revelations to be noted between the lines of verse and commentary, such as the distinct accents of homosexuality that surface in a number of these writings—could the legendary womanizer have been overcompensating?—and the hitherto unreported extent to which Picabia borrowed, not to say plagiarized, from prior sources. Lowenthal highlights two main "inspirations" for Picabia's aphorisms, Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* (one of the few books the painter read with any attention) and the quotations pages of the Larousse dictionary, and he demonstrates how this form of appropriation fit into Picabia's aesthetic. Lowenthal could have taken the discussion further—he neglects the important precursor of Lautréamont's *Poésies*, which made similar use of maxims by Pascal and La Rochefoucauld, and which Picabia (who surely knew the book) might have seen as a go-ahead for his own pilferage—but the parallels that he does draw with Nietzsche and others engage the reader in a more fruitful dialogue with Picabia's texts than would otherwise be possible.

So why can't I finally muster more enthusiasm for this book? Because for all of their sharpness and invention, these writings too seldom reach past mere cleverness or navel-gazing: true self-revelation, if it is to avoid being embarrassing or just plain tedious, demands empathy, depth, and restraint—qualities not normally associated with Picabia's work. Instead, there is a tossed-off, scattershot quality to his darts, which miss as often as they hit, or strive way too hard for effect. And perhaps more than anything, one feels from start to finish a kind of desperation in these texts, an undercurrent of uselessness that is far more dispiriting than the painter's defiant reiterations of "nothing, nothing, nothing." As he once put it, and much more tellingly, "Between my head and my hand, there is always the face of death."

One might rightly object that desperation was part and parcel of Dada's mission. One might also point to similar notes of demoralization in the writings of Tzara, Breton, Arp, and their fellows. But Breton, for one, never lost faith in that "certain point of the mind" at which the debilitating contradictions of the human condition might be resolved. As for Tzara, even his "great destructive" prescription for a clean sweep allowed one to imagine something better once the garbage of the centuries had been cleared away. The proof is that he came around to endorsing the Surrealist project in the 1930s, and later joined the Communist Party—at a time when Picabia was busily damning the leftists as "poor revolutionaries, made in series," and sneering at the very notion of social reform.

I imagine that reading this anthology is not unlike the experience of knowing Picabia himself: alternately exhilarating and exasperating, the truly inspired pronouncements counterbalanced by the truly obnoxious ones. Ultimately, in fact, this collection might reveal more about the beautiful monster than it intended, for by an odd but not inappropriate paradox, it bespeaks a more complex figure than posterity has retained even as it undercuts the legends that earned Picabia that posterity. As the outsized ejaculations of the Dada period slip into the relative quietude of the painter's final decades, the book becomes an exercise in declining vigor and diminishing returns. The recurrences and borrowings in the first sections at least participate in a rabid promiscuity of ideas, as if the sheer velocity of expression and event didn't leave time to check whether something had been said before, or by whom; but the last hundred or so pages make you feel like you have been cornered at a party by a bitter also-ran who endlessly reprises his best lines of yore to hide the sad truth that he has nothing new to say. By the end of this voluminous tome—with its obsessive repetitions and phenomenal self-absorption, its private jokes and petty bickering, its vindictiveness and magnificence—one cannot help recalling another of Picabia's self-mocking nicknames, trotted out, like virtually all his *bons mots*, time and time and time again: Francis the failure. ◆

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Washington Diarist

Theologico-Politicus

How is it that what so many Westerners see as the most unappealing and premodern aspect of Judaism is, to many Jews, the vibrant, attractive core of a global movement of Jewish revival? The explanation surely must go beyond the oversimplified assumption that Jews want to use halakha to reverse feminism and control women—especially since large numbers of women support the halakhists in general and the ideal of halakha in particular." These observations appeared in an account of the splendors of religious law in *The New York Times Magazine* last week. They were written by Baruch Spinoza. I'm sorry, I mean Noah Feldman. In a piece in the same journal of ideas last summer, about the bruising of his feelings by the alumni newsletter of his Orthodox Jewish day school, which responded to his marrying out of his faith by refusing to print his picture, Feldman reminded himself of Spinoza. (The "Mazal Tov" section of the school bulletin put him in mind of Yigal Amir.) Spinoza, of course, would never have written so glowingly about Jewish law, and neither would Feldman, and neither would I. I have altered a few words in his text. For "Judaism", read "Islam"; for "Jews," "Muslims"; for "halakha," "sharia." It was Islamic law that riveted him, and that he was promoting as a swell basis for a political order.

How did *The New York Times* become the voice of moderate Islam in America? I am being mischievous, but not entirely. There was the *Times Magazine*'s notorious (at least I hope it is: we did our best here to make it so) salute to Tariq Ramadan, which was later followed by the appearance in the *Times Book Review* of Ramadan's endless and unbelievably banal sermon about the Koran. "At the heart of every heart's striving lies the Koran. It holds out peace and initiates into liberty." "As the universe is in constant motion, rich in an infinite diversity of species, beings, civilizations, cultures, and societies, so too is the Koran." Which rabbi or priest would be given pages in the *Book Review* to deliver the same apologetic tripe about the OT or the N? And now there is this essay in praise of sharia as a "bold and noble" inspiration for contemporary constitutionalism. On page 51 we are shown admiring photographs of covered women in a religious court in Egypt, and on page 52 we are shown admiring photographs of uncovered women in Nan Goldin's so-downtown-they're-uptown pictures of the expensive dresses of Paris. If the *ulama* fail to hold your attention, there is that flower between Mariacarla Boscono's legs. Meanwhile the advanced editors at the *Times Magazine* busily expose the depredations, of which there are many, of Orthodox Jews, first in Feldman's bathetic whine and then in a piece by Gershom Gorenberg on the indisputable cruelties of the Chief Rabbinate in Israel in the matter of Jewish identity. The anti-clericalism of these editors seems rather selective. I do not want *The New York Times* to become the voice of moderate Judaism, or of any Judaism. I want only that liberals desist from granting Muslims a reprieve from the rigors of liberalism.

In his discussion of Islamism, Feldman, who knows a lot more about Islam than I do, no longer rises to uphold the liberty of conscience. Instead he explains warmly that "to the Islamist politicians who advocate it or for the public that supports it, Shariah … is expected to function as something like a modern constitution." He compares Islamic law to nothing less than "the American constitutional balance of powers." Philadelphia! But hold on. Reading Feldman's analysis, sharia begins to look rather unlike an apotheosis of progressive state-building. For the term "connotes a connection to the divine, a set of unchanging beliefs and principles that order life in accordance with God's will." It "is best understood as a kind of higher law." It is "a legal system in which God's law sets the ground rules." Political legitimacy in a regime of sharia is conferred not by the rulers or the ruled, but by "the scholars," who interpret—which is to say, invent—God's will, and appoint themselves: "judicial authority came from the caliph, but the law came from the scholars." In sum, a dictatorship of divines: malign or benign, but a dictatorship. (Today's Islamism does away with the scholars as "the constitutional balance to the executive," but demands "Islamic judicial review" of all legislation.) It may be that "shariah aspires to be a law that applies equally to every human being," but Feldman says little or nothing about its treatment of women and non-Muslims, or about the law of jihad.

When Feldman's essay appeared, I was reading a book by Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, just published by Harvard University Press, called *Islam and The Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Shari'a*. It begins: "In order to be a Muslim by conviction and free choice, which is the only way one can be a Muslim, I need a secular state. By a secular state I mean one that is neutral regarding religious doctrine, one that does not claim or pretend to enforce Shari'a." *This* is what is bold and noble. The prospects for liberal democracy in many Muslim states are still dim—Feldman is weirdly at peace with the increasing popular support that Islamism enjoys in Egypt, Pakistan, and Jordan—but I do not see that the practical difficulties refute the philosophical principles. (The stupid priests and rabbis, they should have waited out the Enlightenment!) And there is a heroic minority, of various sizes in various countries, to stand with. I cannot tell the secularizers and the democratizers in the Muslim world that they have no need of Milton and Mill if they have Ibn Taymiya and Ibn Khaldun, and that they must be content to raise their children in a type of polity in which I would not be content to raise my own. I understand that the new can come only out of the old, but Feldman is not commending the new, he is commending the old. His offer of a shinier sharia is just another barter of rights for authenticity. This is not gradualism, it is pessimism. We know now that the cultural and intellectual discontinuity represented by democracy is never total, but we know also that the rupture is real, and that its pleasures cannot be experienced without its pains. For this reason, "Islamic liberalism" is a swindle, because it supports a fantasy of progress without tears. Feldman is shilling for a soft theocracy—for other people, naturally. This is, among other things, hypocritical. Don't Muslims, too, have the right to sin?

Leon Wieseltier

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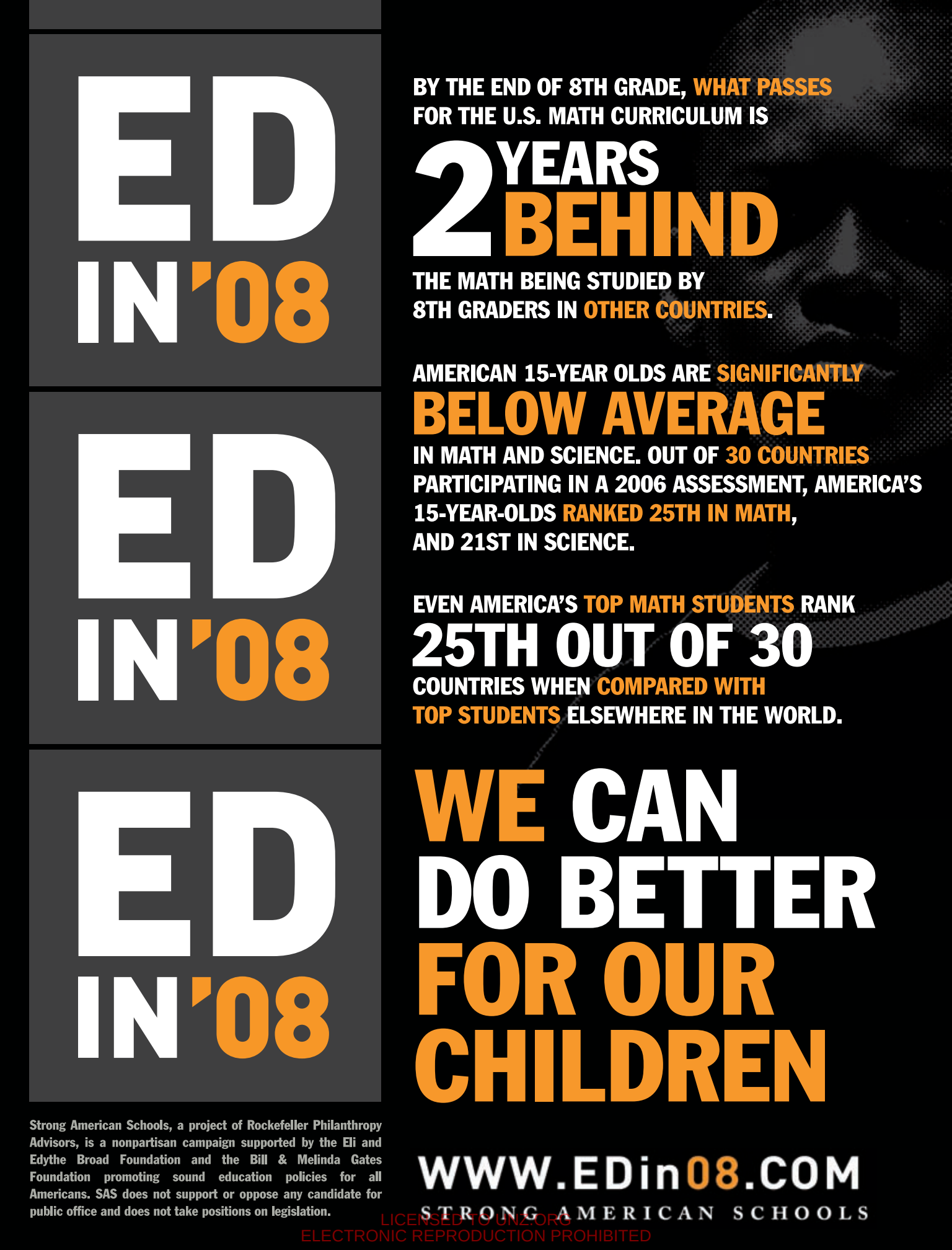
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